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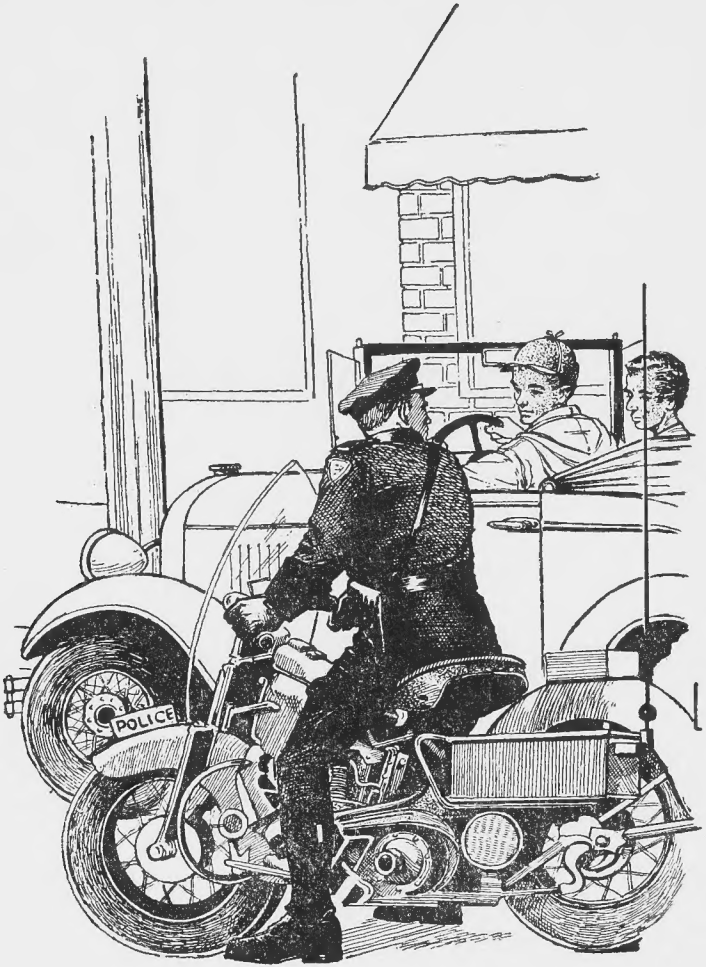
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COLD ADVENTURE



"Let's see your driver's licence," the policeman snapped.

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Engel

To the Memory of my Father
Kristjan Paulson
With Love and Admiration

Chapter One

The cheerless November sun tried to dispel the winter gloom, but it had no effect on Garry Melsted's sullen mood. He was leaving the midwestern city of Winnipeg with its winter sports, and his girl friend, Glenda, for the cold, backbreaking, and often dangerous job of winter fishing on Lake Winnipeg.

As he drove north along Main street, his old car motor, thanks to much tinkering on his part, purred softly. He was waiting for the green light on the outskirts of the city when a young man yanked open the car door and slid into the seat beside him. The light changed to green. He heard impatient honking from cars behind him. Garry slipped the gears and rolled on.

"What's the idea?" He stole a quick glance at his passenger.

"I want a lift," the stranger said. "You're alone; so I hopped in. Mind?"

Of course Garry minded. "Where do you want to go?"

"A few miles out this way would help. Where you headin'?"

"For Gimli."

"Your home there?"

"No."

"What're you goin' to do?"

The guy doesn't mind asking questions, Garry thought. "I'm going on the lake — winter fishing."

"Winter fishing," the stranger mused. "That's way up north in the wilderness?"

"It sure is," Garry told him irritably.

Garry's resentment at leaving the city for the sticks was now turned on this stranger; he liked neither his looks, nor his actions, nor the high-heeled cowboy boots, the straining levis and the three-toned satin sports shirt that he wore. The stranger either sat tense and stared ahead, or took quick nervous glances at the following traffic. He must be a screwball, for he sat in his shirt sleeves in the open car with a black leather jacket clutched in his arms.

Doesn't he feel the cold Garry wondered. He felt the bite of the keen wind through his corvette parka and wool ski pants. He wished to be rid of this youth, but hesitated ordering him out of the car. He might be a dangerous lunatic or an escaped criminal. That jacket concealed something, maybe a gun. The wise move was to humour him; he wanted only a short lift.

Lately Garry had had nothing but trouble, or so it seemed to him. By rights he should be attending university. There was no real reason like lack of funds, or

flunking high school exams, or ill health to bar him. It was his uncle's outmoded idea that a young man should be brought up the hard way, or at least have a taste of it, that was sending Garry out winter fishing. Uncle Ben thought that a man should be able to give a hand to almost any kind of work.

Garry was sure this idea was old fashioned. If a man had a trade or a profession he could succeed. And after all he, Garry, was willing to enter the profession his uncle had suggested—ichthyology, the study of the natural habits of fish.

"Our folks came from Iceland with nothing but their brains and willing hands." His uncle's blue eyes had been hard and determined. "Lake Winnipeg has been a gold mine to them and their descendants, but that's past now. Each year the fish catch decreases."

Old stuff, Garry thought. Since childhood he had listened to talk about decreasing fish. And why should his uncle worry? He had made his pile of money—first fishing, and then exporting fish.

"I feel we owe something to the fishing industry," his uncle had gone on. "I think one of us, a descendant of the first commercial fishermen on the lake, should study the life cycle of our fresh-water fish. And I want that person to be you."

His eyes had brightened as he had said, "Take the goldeye. Once it had no commercial value because the flesh is soft and in transportation loses its shape and looks messy. It took the pioneers along the lake to discover its delicate flavour when smoked. Then an energetic fisherman included a batch of smoked gold-eye with his shipment. Almost overnight the New York

importers were clamouring for more. Soon smoked goldeye were sold in leading fish markets in the United States and Canada. Then came the blow — the goldeye all but disappeared from the lake. Why?"

Garry had known the answer to this, or thought he had. "They were taken out faster than they could spawn."

"Perhaps. But no one knows. Lack of suitable food may have caused them to migrate up the rivers to other lakes. Not long ago, through accident, a northern lake was found to be teeming with goldeye. Fishermen went up there, smoked goldeye, and sent them out by plane.

"Much of our Canadian north is unexplored. There are huge stands of timber waiting to be claimed. Rich new fields of oil and minerals are discovered every few months. There are thousands of lakes we know little about. Some of them might turn out to be rich fishing grounds. It would be most interesting to explore those lakes and to be an authority on Canadian fresh-water fish. It is a great and waiting field for young men."

"I know, Uncle Ben," Garry had said. He had often listened to this talk and he did agree. "But I can't understand why you don't want me to start university this term. Why do you want me to spend the winter with these almost illiterate men? Do you expect me to learn something from them?"

"I want you to go winter fishing because a man to be an authority on fish should know and sympathize with the men who earn their living by fishing." He had formed a teepee of his long brown fingers, and a slow

smile had spread over his face. "Ignorant, you call them. Perhaps they are. But I have found fishermen the most self sufficient, intelligent breed of men I've ever worked with. And I hope you'll find just that."

"But they aren't my kind," Garry had complained.

"Just what is your kind?" Uncle Ben's face had hardened. "This kind of work is not for a weakling. If you can't survive a few months of winter fishing you're not the makings of an ichthyologist, and studying to be one would be wasted time."

So Garry was now on his way to Gimli. From there the fishermen would sail by tugs to their fishing grounds.

The wail of a siren and the violent jerk of the man beside him stopped Garry's reverie. When a road policeman came alongside, Garry drew to the shoulder of the road and stopped. He had not been speeding; he had nothing to fear.

"Let's see your driver's licence," the policeman snapped, still straddling his motorcycle.

Unzippering his parka, Garry drew out his wallet and showed the licence to the man, who handed it back after a quick glance. "Where're you going?" he asked tersely.

"To Gimli. Going on the lake — winter fishing."

"Your name," the policeman had turned to the hitch-hiker, "and where're you going?"

The young man thrust back his too long hair with both hands and touched the tip of his tongue to his lips. "I'm Sam Wilson," he said, "an' I too am goin' on the lake, winter fishin'."

That's screwy, Garry thought. I should tell the

policeman he is a hitch-hiker, but the man's attention was drawn to an approaching car. He motioned it to stop and Garry to go on.

"Get goin'," Sam ordered.

As he slipped the gears, Garry wondered again whether this youth carried a gun. The wind now had a clear sweep across meadows and whistled around them. Sam unwrapped the black jacket, disclosed a brief-case which he placed on the floor by his feet, shrugged into the coat, and sat huddled down in the seat. Garry touched the gas, passed a huge transfer truck, and decided to stay just ahead of it. He didn't trust his passenger; should he have any trouble with him the truck driver would notice it.

"Can't you get any more speed outta this old crate?" Sam spoke through chattering teeth.

"Who's in a hurry? If you don't like my speed, you can get out and walk. If I force her, I might burn a bearing, and where'd that get me!"

"Forget it. I didn't mean anything. That wind's cold."

Going through the now deserted summer resort of Ponemah, Garry caught sight of Lake Winnipeg. It was in an ugly mood. The waves whipped the shore rocks with a sullen, relentless sound, and Garry's mouth hardened. The sound was anything but cheerful, and intensified his resentment.

When the Gimli bus swept past, Garry stepped on the gas, keeping right behind it. He drove past Johnson's Memorial Hospital, past the Canadian Pacific Railway station, and he was in the town of Gimli. He turned up Centre street and stopped in front of the Traveller's Hotel.

"Here we are," he said, feeling relief. Sam had said he wanted only a short ride but had ridden the sixty miles.

"Now, what're you goin' to do?"

"I'm going to get a bite to eat and then look up Chris Arnes," Garry told him.

As Garry stepped from the car, taking the duffle bag with him, he came face to face with his future boss. The man was past middle age, stocky, but not fat. His face was long, with a square chin and a roman nose. He had aged in the five years since Garry had seen him, all but his eyes. His eyes had the same steel-gray brightness.

"At last," he said gruffly. "You might have let me know how you were getting here. I've been meeting trains and buses. I'm expecting a man from the Employment Agency." He noticed Sam. "Are you Timothy Carlson?" he asked.

"Why, yes," Garry's passenger said.

You can't be both Sam Wilson and Timothy Carlson, Garry thought. There's something funny going on. He thought of telling Mr. Arnes, but he was no tattler. He didn't want the kind of trouble that he once had had from tattling. That had cured him.

Disapproval shone in Mr. Arnes' eyes as he looked Garry's passenger up and down. "Good lake hands get scarcer every year," he said. "You don't plan to go north in those duds? Got any proper clothes with you?"

"Well, no. You see — I got nothin' I could wear on the lake. I thought I could —"

"The stores are closed. Tomorrow morning go to the Fisherman's Trading Store. Get them to outfit you and

*"Hello Garry," Nick shouted, holding out his hand.
"Long time no see."*

charge it to me. I'll phone and okay it." He turned and took a step and then faced them again. "It'll go against your wages," he said. "Understand?"

"Sure. I understand. Thanks." For the first time Garry noticed a smile tugging at the young man's lips. He looked much nicer when he smiled.

"I booked a room for you two at the hotel," Mr. Arnes said.

A giant of a young man stepped from a car that drew up. He wore a long parka, ski pants, and high boots. He was bare headed; his blond hair was crew cut and added an inch to his height. "Hello Garry," he shouted, holding out his hand. "Long time no see."

"Hi Nick." The sight of his old pal, Nick, made everything seem brighter to Garry. They had not seen each other since Garry had spent a summer vacation with the Arnes family. Now their glances held, each approving the other. Each had grown much taller, had filled out, and gained weight. They were about the same height, over six feet, and lithe.

"This is my son, Nick," Mr. Arnes told the new hired man. "He's going on the lake with me, too. This is the man I've been expecting, Timothy Carlson."

"Hello Tim," Nick said, and then turned to Garry. "Any plans for tonight? Our last chance to see a show for months. Want to go?"

"I'll get a bite at the old Viking and then meet you at the show."

Nick laughed. "The old Viking burnt down, but the Falcon serves good food. I'll meet you at the show a little before eight." He turned to the other young man. "What about you, Tim? Want to go to a show?"

"I — I don't think I care for a show," Tim said, his eyes shifting to some men across the street. "I think I'll hit the hay."

"That's the one thing you can do out in the sticks, sleep when not working," Nick said, and chuckled, "but suit yourself."

He and his father got into the car and drove away.

Slinging his bulging duffle bag to his shoulder, Garry entered the hotel. Tim joined him at the hotel desk. Now he carried the brief-case beneath his jacket. What's he hiding in that case, Garry wondered.

Garry found their room modern and pleasant, with a small bathroom adjoining. After a quick clean up, he went down the stairs and saw Tim talking to the night clerk.

"I'm sorry," the clerk was telling him, "we have no portable radios, but you can listen to the one in the lounge."

From the lounge lively barn dance music crashed the air. Garry watched Tim go into the room and sit down beside the radio.

Queer gook, he thought. Why did he give his name as Sam Wilson to the road policeman and as Tim Carlson to Mr. Arnes? What's his real name? Did he come from the Employment Agency? With a shrug of his shoulders, Garry stopped thinking about it. He stepped out into the cool, calm, moonlit night. He would have supper at the Falcon Restaurant and then go to a movie, the last he would see for months.

Chapter Two

It was early next morning when Garry awakened and sprang out of bed. He stood with a wry smile while the cool shower sprayed him. It would be months before he enjoyed this luxury again; there would be no shower in the camp on Coyote Island. He dressed hurriedly and was ready to leave when he saw that Tim was still asleep. Garry tapped his shoulder. Tim gasped, sat up and stared wildly about him, and then seeing Garry, he grinned.

"Thanks for waking me," he said, jumping out of bed.

"Better hurry," Garry told him, "and get your outfit at the store. Then come down to the dock. They'll expect you to give a hand at loading the tug."

Swinging his duffle bag to his shoulder, Garry went down the stairs. He found the dining-room crowded with fishermen, both young and middle-aged, dressed in parkas and woollen pants. They all knew one an-

other and there was much joking and laughter and shouting between tables. Garry enjoyed listening until he realized that he was not one of them. He was the only stranger in the room and totally ignored. It gave him a lonesome sort of feeling. Was this the way it was going to be up North? Would he be left alone and ignored by the other men? The waitress brought his breakfast, and he dug into it still wondering, still a little worried. Then he remembered that his friend Nick was going up North too and felt better. He and Nick had been good pals when they were kids.

Breakfast over, the men left in a body. Garry followed them with a light step down toward the dock. He noticed that the gas fishing boats were on shore, propped out of reach of the clutching, icy fingers of the freezing lake. The windmill was pumping water for locomotive engines to a tank half a mile away. As a kid this windmill had fascinated him.

The old wooden lighthouse was gone from the end of the dock, and he felt a nostalgic loss, for the lighthouse had had its sides carved and scribbled with names, his and Nick's among them. He had known the keeper, had watched him trim and fill the large kerosene lamp, and wind the spring that turned the reflector. He had listened to the keeper tell many a thrilling tale of boats caught in storms. He remembered crouching beside Nick on the lee side of the lighthouse when a north gale was blowing and sending huge waves over the dock. And he remembered sitting there when moonlight shot a beam across the lake as smooth as a sheet of ice at a curling rink.

He remembered listening to fish jumping. What

made them jump in the evening? He would like to know that and many other things about fish. He gazed at the electric light standard that had replaced the lighthouse. Turning on a light switch wasn't very romantic; he preferred the old way. He wondered what happened when lightning struck a transformer. How long would the light be out? The old keeper had had no such troubles.

Three tugs were tied up in the breakwater south of the dock, the *Luella*, the *Loon*, and the *Redwing*. All three were being loaded. Garry saw Nick on the deck of the *Loon*, so walked up her gang plank, went up the iron ladder, and tossed his duffle bag behind the wheel-house.

"Looks like a blow," Nick said, squinting up at the sky. "Captain Grimson wants us to speed up the loading. Can you go up to the Highway Garage, get a small truck, and fetch things from our net house."

Garry took his car to the Highway Garage and made arrangements for storing it while he was away. He hired a small truck, drove to the net house in the Arnes' back yard, and loaded the truck with troughs, boxes of nets, boxes of floats and sinkers, and a box of twine, cord, and rope. When he got to the dock, Nick was there with a truck load of groceries.

Garry was unloading his truck when he saw Tim come strolling along the dock. He no longer wore the high-heeled boots, and flashy clothes, but was garbed in a fisherman's outfit — a long corvette windbreaker, ski pants, and heavy-laced boots. Slung across his shoulder was a bulging gunny sack tied with twine. He rested it against an iron stanchion across from the *Loon*.

"If you ain't afraid of skinning your dainty hands," a worker told him, "throw up those boxes."

"That's telling him, Gunnar," another worker said, and laughed.

Tim stood with bunched fists and glared at the man called Gunnar, and then he grabbed a box and took it aboard.

He's quick tempered and ready with his fists Garry thought, and somehow liked Tim better for it.

An hour later the tug was loaded and ready to go. Mr. Arnes' five matched husky dogs were brought aboard just before they left. Garry was surprised; he knew most fishermen had stopped using dogs. They used small bombardiers with steel skis and caterpillar traction. He liked dogs however, and these were beauties. They reminded him of his dog, Tramp, and the fun he had had with him on his paper route.

Standing in the doorway of the wheel-house, Captain Grimson gave a sign to the wheelsman and gave the engineer a signal for half speed ahead. The engineer moved a lever; the tug vibrated with the unleashed power of the diesel engine. In spite of his resentment at leaving civilization, Garry felt a thrill of excitement pulse through him.

"Throw the bow line, Bill," the Captain shouted.

A man snatched the loop off the stanchion and tossed the line. It was hauled in.

The "Loon" swung at an angle from the dock. "Throw the stern line," Captain Grimson ordered.

Bill threw the stern line. The tug had almost made the tight turn in the breakwater when Bill held Tim's sack aloft.

"This belong to you guys?" he yelled.

Tim, standing in the stern, gave a gasp. "It's mine!" he shouted.

Grinning, Bill ran along the dock and then tossed the sack. Gunnar caught it. "The greenhorns get worse every year," he growled. "Now they need a nurse-maid to look after their duds." He turned to Tim. "What would you've done up North without your nylon nighty?" He flung the sack down at Tim's feet. His remarks were met with gales of laughter from the men.

Garry felt sorry for Tim. It was no fun being teased and ridiculed and called a greenhorn. He knew that the fishermen would tease and heckle him, Garry, too, but he'd show them that he was as good as they were, that there was nothing they could do that he couldn't do.

The crowd on the dock waved and shouted to their friends. There was no one to wave good-bye to him. He raised an arm and thought, "I'll be seeing you," but he was thinking of Glenda.

One by one the men disappeared from the deck. Laughter and accordion playing were heard from one of the cabins. Garry and Tim, the only ones left on deck, moved to the lee of the cabin with their bags, for now that the tug had pulled out of the harbour the wind had a clear sweep. Both boys were silent and brooding. Garry had no wish to become friendly with Tim. He was much too suspicious of him.

Then it began to snow. Small, hard pellets of ice struck painfully where they found unprotected flesh. Garry bent his head lower and pulled his parka hood tighter about his face. There were two inches of snow

on deck when a sailor finally came and told them there was room in the mess.

Garry was hungry and ready for the midday dinner. He and Tim stood up and walked stiff-legged down the ladder to the small dining-room behind the galley. It was narrow, and the table, flanked by two benches nailed to the walls, almost filled it. The rest of the fishermen had eaten, but two deck hands sat at the table with them. The slab of roast beef and potatoes with well-browned gravy and mashed turnips tasted good; so did the generous wedge of apple pie and the coffee.

After the meal, Garry intended to return to the deck, but a wizened little man — Garry learned later he was their camp cook — with bright gray eyes and tightly curled white hair showing beneath his cap stuck his head through the galley doorway. "My name is Petur," he said. "No sense you fellas going up on deck again to freeze. You stay right here where it's warm."

Petur was the first man to show him any consideration. Garry wasn't going to forget that. "Will it be all right? It's sure cold up on deck."

"You stay," the little man said and ducked into the galley.

It was hot and stuffy in the small room. Soon Garry felt his head throb and he had a squeamish tingle in his stomach. Ripples of alternate heat and cold ran up and down his spine. He climbed the ladder to the deck for fresh air.

They were sailing smoothly through the channel between Big and Black Islands. Garry saw the old campsite of a lumber mill on the well-timbered Black

Island, the lighthouse on the point, and the deserted fish hatchery at the base of Gull Harbour on Big Island. Leaving the channel behind, they again received the full force of wind and wave. The tug rose on a crest, teetered, and slid into a trench. She rolled from side to side, cutting the waves slantwise. To keep his balance, Garry clung to a cleat on the cabin wall.

Tim came dashing up the ladder, slithered on the new snow, slid to the railing, and was sick. It was all Garry needed. No longer could he ignore the revolt in his stomach. He too rushed to the railing.

It was just their luck that Gunnar should come from one of the cabins at this time. He stared at them with a wicked glint in his hazel eyes. The heaving deck was no bother to him; he had the stance and swagger of a sailor.

"I see you are feeding the fishes," he said and chuckled. "Don't lean overboard too far, or we'll have to fish you from the lake. Have a good time." With another chuckle, he swaggered on his way to the wheel-house.

That young man, that Gunnar, Garry thought. I'll get even with him if it's the last thing I do.

Some time later Garry and Tim were sitting on their bags, shivering and turning their faces from the biting wind, when a young man came up the ladder. He was tall and lean, olive complexioned, with large, friendly brown eyes. "Get out of the cold," he said. "Go down to the mess and lay down on the benches. You'll soon feel fine. And do not worry, even ocean sailors turn green on this choppy lake. And do not let the men — how do you say it — get under your skin." He smiled

showing beautifully white teeth. "These fishermen are the kindest in the world. I have known many unkind men and I should be a good judge. At first they called me the Greenhorn and the D.P., that's for displaced person. I didn't like it, so once I told them my name was Philip. Never again did they call me the Greenhorn or the D.P. They call me Phil. I like that."

Neither Garry nor Tim answered, and Phil went on. "The men teach me everything about the work. They will teach you too. You will like them. Now come down with me."

The fishermen are not kind, Garry thought as he followed Phil down the ladder, and I know I shan't like them, but I'll work hard and learn everything about fishing.

He and Tim lay down on the benches in the mess and were soon asleep. It was dark; the swaying drop light was on when they were awakened by someone slapping their legs.

"You fellas go to the engine room," the tug's cook said. "I have to set the table for supper."

The engine room was hot and smelled of grease and crude oil. Garry and Tim sat on a small bench until called for supper. Surprisingly Garry felt hungry, and the cold ham, pan fried potatoes, hot biscuits, and tea tasted good. He noticed, though, that Tim took only biscuits and tea.

Garry began to wonder where the fishermen would spend the night, for he knew there was cabin room only for the crew. He learned that the crew shared their cabins and that he and Tim were to sleep on the benches in the mess. They slipped off their boots and

used their parkas for pillows. Once during the night Garry awakened and found himself on the floor beneath the table. The *Loon* still pitched and rolled as she bucked strong head winds and waves.

Morning dawned clear with a cold wind still blowing. It was mid afternoon when they drew close to Coyote Island. Between a leaden sky and grayish water, it looked desolate with snow-spattered evergreens and naked poplars. As they entered Jack Fish Cove, the tug broke the layer of shore ice with a tinkle like the shattering of glass.

The *Loon* docked, and a mad bustle of unloading began with the tug crew helping, for Captain Grimson didn't like the unseasonable drop of the thermometer. He feared the Red River might freeze over and he would not be able to reach his winter berth at Selkirk. At last they were finished, and the tug, with a cheery blast of her whistle, started on her return trip.

For a few minutes the men stood on the dock and watched her steam away, and then they began lugging the supplies up shore to the cabin and net house. Garry knew that the last tie with civilization had gone with the tug. For a wild moment he wished he had gone back with her. He didn't want to stay in this wilderness. He didn't want to work with these men. For a second he was filled with unutterable, almost overpowering loneliness, and then with a shrug he heaved a box to his shoulder and strode up shore.

Chapter Three

Garry stared with distaste at the unpeeled log cabin hugging the rocky ground. Behind it was a stand of spruce, bordered by a scattering of large boulders. To the right there was an unpainted rough lumber shack used for storing nets and other gear; and behind that stood six large reels made of lumber, looking like skeletons of giant crabs, and used for drying nets.

As Garry lugged boxes up to the net house, he was conscious of chirping chickadees in the trees and saw a red squirrel scurrying along the roof of the net house, chattering and scolding. Undoubtedly he had his winter supply of nuts hidden someplace near and resented the intrusion.

It was almost dark when they carried the last of the gear up from the shore. Garry's hands were scratched and swollen, his shoulders ached, and his leg muscles pained.

He was pleasantly surprised when he entered the

cabin. An Aladdin lamp hanging from one of the rafters cast a bright light into every corner of the large kitchen-living-room. The kitchen range gave off a welcome warmth, and the smell of cooking was mouth watering. A cot and a home-made bookcase stood against one wall. On top of the bookcase were three carved wood figurines, and a carved plaque of a sail-boat was nailed to the wall above. Scattered about the room were a number of canvas deck-chairs. Along the wall opposite the bookcase was a freshly scrubbed pine table flanked by benches. Cartons of groceries and other supplies were neatly stacked at the far end of the room, near the stove. Cupboards fashioned from wooden boxes were nailed to the wall. The floor was swept clean, and everything looked neat and tidy.

The men hung their outer garments on spikes driven into the log walls. Garry hung up his parka and waited his turn at washing up. He sat down in a deck-chair and studied the men who were little more than names to him. All counted, there were nine of them. He now saw that Petur, the cook, had only a thick fringe of white curls on the back of his head from ear to ear; the rest of his head was bald. Bergur was the stocky, broad-shouldered young man with red, close-cropped hair, and bright blue eyes in a round face. Gunnar was the biggest man in camp. He was tall with big shoulders, big hands and feet, big head with sandy short hair, and piercing eyes in a long, high cheek-boned face. Phil, the displaced person, had thinning brown hair receding at the temples, large brown eyes, and a quick smile showing glistening white teeth; he was tall and lanky. Thor was married, and the father of a baby

daughter of whom he was very proud. He was of medium height and build but wiry. His gray eyes looked calm and steady now but they could flash and smolder when he was angry. Tim was a tall, lean youth, with soft brown hair worn too long. He sported sideburns, and his face bore an unhealthy pallor.

When his turn came to wash, Garry dipped the tin wash basin into the gasoline drum serving as water tank.

"There is a strict rule in this camp," Phil said, towel-ling his face. "Each man has to hang up his clothes and wash up before meals. Petur is very strict about that."

Though they had worked hard and must be tired, high spirits gripped the men at the supper table. To most of them this place was a second home, and to some the only place they could call home. All seemed happy and ready for another season of hard work. The food was much the same as they had had on the tug: roast beef with potatoes, canned beets, raisin pie, and tea.

The meal over, the men lounged about the room. The Boss lay on the cot reading a book. Bergur, the red-headed young man, held a figurine in his rough hands. He must have worked on it before, for it was half finished. Placing the figurine on the floor, he reached for a chisel from a box at his feet, honed it, and began carving. Garry watched him, marvelling at the quick sure thrusts of the chisel. He stepped to the bookcase and picked up one of the figurines and examined it. It copied a man wearing a parka with pants tucked into his boots and a plank poised in his hands.

The face was strong and hard and bore an intent look. The whole thing was tinted in natural colours.

"Gee, but this is good." Garry studied the figurine at arm's length.

"Sure. It is splendid," Phil said, coming nearer. "Bergur made it."

"I know it's a fisherman," Garry said, "but what is he doing?"

"He is about to scuttle the jigger," Phil told him.

Garry still didn't understand what the man was doing. He examined the other figurines and the plaque on the wall. They were expertly carved.

"Do you sell any of your work?" he asked Bergur.

"Naw," Bergur said without looking up.

"He just gives them away," said Nick, joining them. "The fool doesn't know how good they are." He gave Bergur a friendly punch on the shoulder.

"Aw shucks, they ain't so good," said Bergur, his eyes intent on his work. "I just like doing them."

"I watched a man carving once," said Garry, "at a handicraft show. His figurines weren't nearly so good, but he sold them for a good price."

"Yeah," Bergur grunted without interest.

There was a clatter of dishes as Petur piled them at one end of the table. "Phil," he called, "you can get at your work now."

"You've gone to university?" Thor said to Garry.

"No. I was going to start this term, but came to learn from you guys instead."

"Learn from us. That's a laugh. You're elected camp professor. This future professor in English nearly drove us nuts last winter." He made a face at Phil. In a

falsetto voice he said, "What's another word for sprinting, for highway, for domicile?" In his natural voice he went on. "Phil's taking a correspondence course in English. He writes long essays with our spelling. He makes us look up words in the dictionary when we can't tell him the meaning. From now on, he's all yours."

They all laughed, including Phil. Garry remembered he had said the fishermen were kind. Phil brought his assignments and began studying and writing at one end of the long table.

Garry felt rested and restless but didn't know what to do. The men amused themselves, reading, playing solitaire, and doing jig-saw puzzles. Gunnar played the accordion softly. Petur began washing dishes, piling them in a flat pan. Garry picked up one of the folded towels and began to dry them.

"That's not your job," Petur said, nudging him away with his elbow.

"I know that," Garry told him, reaching for a mug, "but I want to dry them."

The old cook stood with his hands resting in the sudsy water and stared at him. Garry feared he was going to stop washing, but he began again.

Glancing up, Nick grinned, put his magazine away, and sauntered over to the table. "Garry and I'll beat you," he told Petur. "Bet you can't keep up with us." He grabbed the other towel and began drying. Muttering to himself, the old man dug in and worked fast. Garry and Nick were hard put to keep up with him. More than once Garry caught the old man's questioning glance and wondered whether he was offended. He hoped not.

The dishes finished, Petur said, "Thank you," and gave Garry a quick smile as he went to the bunkroom.

"Trying to bribe our cook?" said Thor. "Hoping for an extra piece of pie, a bigger slab of meat? Your time is wasted. No one, but no one, gets any favours from Petur."

Garry laughed. "I hope I didn't offend him."

"You didn't." Thor's large brown eyes held a quizzical look as he watched Garry. "You must have something the rest of us haven't got. Never before have I heard him thank anyone for anything. And the old sourpuss actually smiled at you. He's the best camp cook on the lake. I don't know what we'd do without him, but he's growing old and tired and cranky and should retire." Thor chuckled softly. "But he's a good scout, and no one minds his growling," he said fondly.

Gunnar had been puttering with a battery radio on the shelf, his broad shoulders hunched as he connected wires and turned dials. "She's okay," he said grinning at the men and stepping with that sailor's swagger to one of the benches.

The radio music ended, and a news cast came on. Garry paid little attention to the beginning, but when a car accident was mentioned, he became alerted. The commentator stated that a pedestrian, name of man not to be released until later, had been killed at the intersection of Market Street and William Avenue by a speeding car. Hitting the man, the driver had lost control of the car, and it had run up on the curb and crashed a light standard. One man in the car, still unidentified, had been killed. A bystander, who had witnessed the accident, reported that a young man had

crawled out of the wreckage and sprinted down William Avenue towards Main Street. The police were looking for this man.

Sometime during the report, Garry glanced at Tim. He seemed relaxed in his chair and not very interested in the news, but the knuckles of his fingers showed white from pressure and a film of sweat glistened on his upper lip. Garry wondered if he had been the driver of the car.

The news finished, Gunnar turned off the radio. He yawned and stretched. "I'm ready for my bunk," he said.

The men all stood up, and the Boss turned the lamp off. The bunkroom was at one end of the cabin, cut off from the kitchen-living-room by a rafter-high partition. The room was long and narrow, with tiers of bunks along the two side walls, a window in one end wall, and a small bracket lamp on the other. A small heater stood in the centre. The men took to their old bunks, and Garry and Tim chose two unoccupied ones near the window. Garry found the mattress hard but not uncomfortable. It was filled with fresh straw which crackled when he moved. For a while he listened to the noises about him: some men snored, some sounded as if they had whistles in their throats, others groaned and moaned. Before long he drifted into a dreamless sleep.

Chapter Four

When Garry awakened, it was still dark, but lamplight streamed through the bunkroom doorway. Confused at first he stared about, and then remembered where he was. The shattering din was reveille, made by Petur banging the aluminum dish pan with a large metal spoon. The men sprang from their bunks. They ate breakfast in almost complete silence and then trooped out of doors.

The sun was peering up above the eastern horizon. It gave no warmth as yet, however, and its rays had difficulty penetrating the haze that lay over the lake. Garry felt a little irritable; he was not used to getting up so early, and no one had spoken to him or told him what to do. Why all this mad rush anyway?

The men gathered in the net house and by lantern light sorted nets. Many of them were new, both nylon and cotton, and these were taken outside. Two men would fasten a net to a large hook in the wall, and then,

working on either side of it, they would seam the net to a strong cord, using large shuttles with coarse twine. Garry watched Thor and Phil working, but their shuttles worked in and out so fast that he couldn't follow the movement.

He still stood watching them when Bergur, the wood carver, brought a net and hung it on a hook.

"Can you seam?" he asked the new hired men, Tim and Garry.

"Seam nets?" Tim said, sounding as if Bergur had used a foreign language.

"I don't know how," Garry told him, "but I can learn."

"I didn't expect you could." Bergur looked at the two new lake hands, his blue eyes growing intense as he wondered how to employ them. "A lot of wood has to be split for the heater and the cook stove. Can you split?" He looked hopefully from one to the other. Older fishermen didn't want to split wood if they could get out of doing it. That work was for the inexperienced.

Tim shook his head. Garry had split kindling at scout camps, but he was here to learn about fishing, not to split firewood. He too shook his head.

Bergur stared at the two as if they were rare species of human beings. "Gosh," he said, "when I was only ten years old, I split all the wood my mother used for her stove." He was silent for a second and then said, "Corking nets is easy. Come with me; I'll show you."

Garry and Tim followed him to the other side of the net house. Along the wall were boxes of nets, sinkers, and floats. Going to one of the net boxes Bergur picked up a metal cylinder, unscrewed the top, and pulled out

two steel needles about the size of knitting needles, with a small hook on one end. He handed one to Garry, the other to Tim. Then he demonstrated how they were used. He passed a needle through a float, hooked the twine made for the purpose on the net, pulled it through, and tied it to the seam-cord with a single bowknot. Then he hurried off to his waiting work.

"Who does he think he is?" Tim said sullenly. "Just because we can't split wood, does he have to look at us as if we're dopes?"

"We'll show him we aren't. We'll show them all," Garry said, mooring the net to the hook. "We get our food and are drawing wages. You can't blame the men for wanting us to earn our keep."

They began corking the nets. Standing on either side they drew the loop through a cork and tied it. It was easy. They worked fast, trying to keep ahead of each other.

The sun was up. The eastern sky was crayoned red and yellow, promising a bright sunny day, but it was cold. Their breaths formed puffs of frozen vapour, but there was no wind, and they were on the east side of the net house receiving what warmth there was from the sun. They worked swiftly, without talking, and had almost finished the net length and were proud of their accomplishment when Gunnar came round the corner of the net house.

He stopped short. He stared at their handiwork. Then he raised both arms and brought them down, slapping his thighs and roaring with laughter. Garry wondered whether he had lost his senses. Without a word Gunnar turned and sprinted round the corner.

"What's the matter with him?" said Tim.

"I don't know, but something struck him as funny, very funny." They went on working.

In no time the accordion player was back again, and all the men except Petur were with him. Gunnar stood with his feet apart as if he expected the ground to heave like the deck of a ship. He burst into laughter. Thor gave a shriek, and then bubbling laughter. Nick laughed until he was limp and leaned against the wall, tears running down his face. The Boss chuckled. Phil stood with a grin on his face, but his brown eyes were filled with compassion.

Garry felt heat spread over his body. Evidently they had done something amusing. But what? Tim glared at the men.

"This might be a good way —" Gunnar said, but he couldn't continue for laughter. Then he stopped long enough to add. "It might be a good way to catch flying fish from the ocean, but through ice —" He couldn't go on for laughter.

All the men went into another convulsion of laughter, and suddenly Garry understood why they laughed. He didn't blame them; this was ridiculous. To keep nets perpendicular in water, they had floats along one side and sinkers on the other. He and Tim had placed floats on both sides.

"We should have put sinkers on one side," he told Tim.

"Bergur said to cork it. He never mentioned anything about sinkers. How were we to know?"

This brought a fresh gale of laughter. "That's enough," the Boss said, motioning with his hand for the

men to leave. "It's true we call it 'corking'," he said. "Now I'll show you." Sitting on a box he picked up a lead sinker and a small hammer. "Place the twine loop of the net in this groove and give it three light taps, not too hard because the groove must be easily opened when necessary, and then tie the twine in a bowknot as you did on the floats." He stood up and looked at the new fishermen with a glint in his gray eyes and his lips puckered in a friendly smile. Then he left them to their work.

"You cork another net," Garry told Tim. "I'll take the floats off this one and put on sinkers."

They worked in silence, Tim corking and Garry fastening on sinkers. They worked on net after net. Handling the chilled metal of the lead sinkers, Garry's hands grew cold and he had difficulty tying the knots. He had never heard a more welcome sound than the clatter of a spoon on a dish pan, the signal for noon mess.

They had made a mistake and had wasted time. Now Garry understood why the boss of a fishing station was anxious to hire experienced men. There was so much to learn. An unskilled worker wouldn't even earn his board, let alone his wages.

"Let's hurry eating," he said to Tim as they walked to the cabin, "and get to work again."

"Why?" Tim wanted to know. "I'm so cold."

"We lost time. It's up to us to work longer than the other men."

They gulped down their meal and left the cabin. They had been at work for half an hour when the rest of the gang came out.

The hours dragged endlessly that afternoon. The sun crossed the zenith, and Garry and Tim worked in the shade. A cold wind sprang up, blowing across the lake. Garry's fingers swelled from the cold and seemed all thumbs when he tied the knots. His feet felt numb and his back ached, but he worked doggedly, trying to ignore his discomfort. At last the signal for supper broke the silence. And what a supper! Thick navy bean soup with generous chunks of pork and vegetables and hot baked bread with apricot sauce, and coffee.

The men relaxed after the meal, each with his own hobby or interest. The Boss sat on the cot with a card table before him and worked on a jigsaw puzzle. Bergur worked on his figurine. Phil had his papers and books spread on the table. Gunnar played his accordion. He really could play, and hoedowns, waltzes, and rock and roll tunes rippled from beneath his agile fingers. Tim and Thor were reading magazines. Again Garry and Nick dried the dishes.

"Wonder if the flying fish are biting," Bergur said in a droll voice. This remark brought grins and laughter. "I remember my first winter up north," he went on, sandpapering his carving, "when we were stationed at Little Georges Island. There were just four of us with a young lad — I was no older — for cook." He polished the figurine with the heel of his hand. "Just as we reached camp one bright moonlight evening, the shack door flew open and an axe was hurled out; then the young cook burst out of the door into 40 below weather without either cap or coat and sprinted down the shoreline as if followed by the devil."

"Maybe he was," Nick said.

"I wheeled the dogs about and hightailed after him," Bergur went on. "I thought he'd gone wacky, gone bushed. When I caught up with him and grabbed him, I asked what was the matter."

"I seen a ghost," he quavered, hardly able to talk.

"Did anyone else see the ghost?" Thor asked, his eyes shining with interest.

"Yeah," Bergur told him with a grin, "we all did."

"Ha, ha," Gunnar said scornfully.

"We all saw what he took for a ghost. We were at supper when the door, which opened inward and was kept shut tight by a heavy stone on rope and pulley, began to act strangely. It opened slowly with squeaking hinges; then shut quickly. This happened a number of times. We all stopped eating and stared at it. I was scared; I didn't want to see a ghost."

"Was it a real ghost?" Tim said nervously.

"It was real all right," Bergur chuckled. "You should have seen the cook's face. Maybe we all looked as scared, as we waited. The door opened again with that same uncanny sound." Bergur looked about him, enjoying the interest in his yarn. "Then a dog, who hadn't worked that day because he was lame, pushed his head inside and stared at us with begging eyes. The smell of cooking meat had brought him, but he knew he shouldn't come inside. And that was the ghost the cook saw. He never lived that one down."

They all laughed. Then Thor said, "We were stationed at Humbug Bay that winter and had a cook who was not very bright. He was cleanly and good-natured, but he served the same food day after day after day. He made good baking powder biscuits, and that's what

we had — biscuits. One evening when we reached camp we saw smoke coming from the stove pipe, but the shack was in darkness. Our first thought was that the cook had had an accident, or had got sick.”

“Had something happened to him?” Tim asked.

“No.” Thor laughed. “He was sitting in the darkness beside the well-stoked stove. When I asked him why there was no light, he told me that the match box was empty and he couldn’t find another one. I pulled a sliver from a stick in the box, lifted a stove lid, lit it, and lit the lamp.”

“That took brains,” Nick teased.

“That took real brains,” Thor told him.

Old tales about greenhorns, Garry thought. He wondered how often the yarn about corking both edges of a net and flying fish would be repeated. The men were welcome to their fun this once, but it wasn’t going to happen again. He was not going to be a greenhorn for long. He was going to learn and work hard and be accepted as one of them.

Chapter Five

With keen interest, the men watched the vagaries of the weather; so much depended on it. They listened to weather reports on the radio, but they were not dependable for this location. There was a barometer in the cabin, and a thermometer hung on an outside wall. These the Boss studied while he watched the sky for cloud formations. He was a canny weather predictor.

For the last two weeks it had been cold and calm, and the shore ice grew thicker each day. The nets were now seamed, corked, sinkered, and coiled in troughs and boxes ready for use.

On Sundays the men did not work. Gunnar, the camp's mechanic, had overhauled the small bombardier's engine in his free time. He stood now, head cocked to one side, eyes half closed, listening to the engine's purr. "She sounds okay," he said to the Boss who sat on an upturned nail keg smoking his pipe.

"She'd better," the Boss said. "It won't be long now till we'll be using her."

Garry heard the engine running and entered the garage. The bombardier interested him. It was as large as a station wagon and had four portholes like windows. It had a pair of steel skis in front and two endless caterpillar tracks in back, with four rubber-tired wheels on each side.

"This is the best rig ever invented for use in the North," Gunnar said.

"Isn't 'bombardier' a funny name for it?" Garry said.

"Yeah, sounds like it had something to do with war, but it's named after the man in Quebec who invented it." Gunnar stopped to examine an outboard motor straddling a cleat on the wall.

"Expect to go boating this winter?" Garry asked pleasantly.

"One never knows what to expect on a fishing job," Gunnar said, testing the primer. "One never knows. It might come in handy."

"That's right," the Boss said. "Have it ready just in case." He puffed on his pipe, and then said, "I know it's much faster and more comfortable riding in a 'bom', but I miss my dogs. I miss riding on a sled in the cold morning and running behind a loaded sled in the evening. Running keeps a man fit." He took his pipe from his mouth, and a quizzical grin spread over his face, and a glint appeared in his steel gray eyes. "Besides all that," he said, "I'm always scared in the closed-in 'bom'. I never forget there might be crevices, and dogs have a keener sense of danger than men. A good lead-dog can nearly always sense a crevice in time."

"I've often heard my uncle talk about crevices," Garry said. "Are they dangerous?"

"That they are. Going back to camp once, we were caught in a blizzard. My dog-train was in the lead, followed by three other trains. At the time I had a clever lead-dog called Bosi. He had almost human intelligence. There was a head-on gale, and we had been going some time when Bosi swerved quickly to the right and stopped. I hauled him about and ordered him on. Nothing doing; he wouldn't take a step. The others caught up with me and wanted to know what was wrong. I told them Bosi refused to go on."

"Then what happened?" Garry wanted to know. "What was the matter with your dog?"

"I'll soon fix him", Julli, one of the men said, raising his whip arm. I caught it and told him to lay off my dogs. He got mad. He was a quick-tempered fellow, always beating up his dogs to show them who was master. This time he took out his rage on his own dogs and gave each a sound beating; then he ordered them ahead. They dashed into the swirling snow."

"Then what happened?" Gunnar said. "Why didn't your dog obey?"

The Boss relit his pipe and when it was going, continued.

"A few minutes later we heard a scream. We moved carefully towards it. We found the dogs and Julli in open water. The dogs had rushed right into it, too scared of Julli to use their brains. We managed to haul them out, cut the traces of the wheel-dog, put Julli in one of the loaded sleds, and start for camp, leaving Bosi to find the way."

"Did Julli's wet dogs reach camp?" Garry's sympathy was with the dogs.

"Sure," the Boss said, "and were taken into the cabin and taken care of. So was Julli, but he got pneumonia."

"Served him right," Gunnar said.

"That's what we thought," the Boss grinned, "but he didn't work again that season which made us a man short."

Gunnar yanked the outboard motor's starter string. After a few snorts, it started and ran smoothly.

The Boss had not finished; he began another tale. "Dogs are wise," he said, "and it often pays to let them have their way, but not always." He chuckled. "Another time, that same dog, Bosi, was not so clever. Again coming to camp we were caught in a gale, blow-have their way, but not always." He chuckled. "An-ing slantwise. There was no snow on the lake and it was very slippery. When we reached the shoreline, we hit a spot where the pressure ice was high. Bosi knew he had started off in the right direction and that we should have found the cut in the pressure ridge. He got stubborn and tried to climb up the ridge. I had to yank him down and lead him along the shoreline before he would go my way. You see, he couldn't reason about that drift, couldn't understand the wind had pushed us off course on the slippery ice. But most times he was a clever dog."

"Uh huh," Gunnar said. "Dogs might have been all right in the old days, but give me a bombardier every time."

The dinner signal sounded, and the men trooped to the cabin. They had finished eating, but were still seated at the table, when Nick leaned back against the

wall and said, "Sundays are boring. I feel like doing something. Let's have a Glima match."

"Sure," Bergur said, "let's have some wrestling."

Most of these young men were of Icelandic descent, and Glima is the national sport of Iceland. It is much like wrestling but has neither strangle holds, limb twisting, nor punches. Strength and weight do not count so much as agile footwork, body twisting, and a few tricks. The commonest trick is the Hael krok, in which a participant hooks his heel behind his opponent's heel, then pushes and swings him to make him lose his footing and fall on his back.

The men were eager for this contest of skill. They pulled off their heavy boots, donned moccasins, and went outside without parkas. There was bright sunshine, but it was cold and still. They gathered on a smooth patch of ground between the net house and the cabin.

Nick and Gunnar were picked for the first contest. They buckled leather straps about their upper thighs. These were for hand-grips. Then both young men grasped each other's straps, pushed their heads forward over the other's shoulder with chests close, and kept their legs away from each other. They began the Glima.

From the start Gunnar, though heavier, proved lighter and faster on his feet. He danced about like a fencer. Time after time he lifted Nick off his feet and tried to throw him, but Nick managed to keep out of reach of the treacherous hael krok. Then Nick lifted Gunnar, but the cunning wrestler bent his knees and kept his feet out of reach. Then Gunnar got Nick's heel in a clinch, and each hopped about on one foot

trying to overthrow the other. The watching men shouted encouragement to Nick. Garry wondered why they favoured him. Nick lifted his opponent, twisted him, and then tossed him. Gunnar sailed through the air and the men cheered. But Gunnar had the limberness of a cat; he twisted in mid-air coming down on hand and toe. He was safe; so they started again. Soon after, Gunnar threw Nick who landed square on his back. Gunnar had won. Though cold, the two men faced each other panting and laughing and wiping sweat from their faces, as they shook hands.

Nick unbuckled the straps and held them out to Thor. "Your turn to take him on," he said.

Thor grinned, but as he buckled the straps, grimness settled about his mouth. He was almost as tall as Gunnar but slimmer.

"Now you'll see something," Bergur remarked to Garry. "These two seem equally good, but Thor has never been able to get Gunnar down. Gunnar's a crackerjack at Glima."

The two men got into position. At first they just stood, each waiting for the other to move, and then they began dancing and weaving about. Garry noticed that Thor was fully as nimble on his feet as the other man. It was exciting to watch them. Sometimes they would stop and just stand, and then one or the other would try a surprise tackle or would feint with one foot but with lightning speed employ the other. It was one of these feints that caught Thor off guard, and he was slammed down on his back. It was over. Gunnar had won.

Thor still grinned as he unbuckled the straps, but

disappointment was reflected on his face. "Your turn next," he said, holding out the straps to Bergur.

"Why me?" Bergur said, taking the straps. "What's the use? I go down so fast I don't know what's happened to me. Give me someone else. I want a little practice." He looked the men over and then said, "Phil is more my match. Give me Phil."

"He's right," Nick said. "Let these two have a try."

Phil had never seen the sport before coming to the camp two years ago. He had had instruction and some practice and was keen to learn. They took positions and started. Gunnar circled about them giving advice or ridicule like a boxing coach.

"Watch your feet, Phil," he urged. "Get in some foot work. Don't be afraid to use them; they aren't made of wood — or are they?" To Bergur he said. "You left yourself wide open. Keep your feet on the move. You have feet. Remember."

Phil and Bergur tussled about, exhibiting more strength than skill and agility. The men laughed at their clumsy efforts, and it ended by Bergur getting Phil down.

"Now, Bergur take Garry on," Nick said with glee in his voice.

As a kid, Garry had learned the rudiments of this wrestling, but had not practised for years. "I'm no good," he said, "but I'll take a try at it."

Garry heard laughter as he and Bergur tussled and strained. He heard Gunnar's caustic advice, but before he had a chance to try what little skill he possessed, he found himself flat on his back.

"Now, we'll have Garry and Tim at it," Gunnar said.

Garry was willing to try again, but Tim shook his head. "I don't know what it's all about," he said.

"Well, try," Thor urged. "You'll never learn if you never try."

But Tim would have none of it. The men felt exhilarated; there was no ill feeling among them. No one had lost his temper. This had been a sport, a test of skill, and they had all enjoyed it, but now they were conscious of the cold seeping through their scant clothing and they hurried to the cabin.

Inside they sat on benches and chairs while Gunnar explained the tactics of the Glima. He picked Bergur for demonstrating the use of toes, heels, and even knees. Garry watched with keen interest, realizing that there was more to the art of being a Glima expert than he had imagined.

The lesson over, Nick said, "It's too nice a day to spend indoors. Anyone want to go on a hike?"

"I do," Garry told him quickly.

Chapter Six

Nick took a loaf of bread from the box. "I always get hungry on a hike. Petur doesn't like us to mess with the food, but he's snoozing. I'll make us some sandwiches."

He cut eight slices of homemade bread, buttered them, spread mustard on them, and then sliced thick slabs of roast beef for filling. He placed them in a paper bag.

They changed from moccasins to heavy boots, shrugged into their parkas, and started off, following an overgrown old road through the forest across Coyote Island. Nick said it had been used by teamsters in the old days before they had tractor-trains for hauling fish. It was four miles to the other side of the island.

"In summer there are a lot of berries along this road," Nick said, gathering driftwood from the shore for a camp-fire. "First there are strawberries and blueberries. When they're finished, there are raspberries."

Just wait till you taste Petur's strawberry shortcake and berry pies. They're really something."

"Does he pick the berries?" Garry collected sticks and put them on the pile on the beach.

"He sure doesn't. We'd never have any if he had to pick them. He hasn't time. First we eat our fill, and then pick for him."

With his jackknife, Nick cut a thin layer of bark from a birch tree, broke off some lower dead branches of a spruce tree, and started a fire on the sand. He broke off two forked branches of a poplar and whittled the prongs to sharp points.

"Take one," he said. "We'll toast our sandwiches." He thrust the prongs of the stick into a sandwich and, squatting on his heels, held it to the fire. Garry thought this a good idea and did the same.

"What do you do when you come summer fishing?" he said, turning the sandwich on the prongs.

"We fish," Nick replied, laughing: "pickerel." He turned his sandwich. "When I say pickerel, I mean mostly pickerel, but other fish of the same size are caught too: saugers, small pike, tullibee, and others." Nick began eating his sandwich, "Did you know that the Americans call our pike, pickerel, and our pickerel, pike? Isn't that funny?"

"Which is right?"

"What do you think? Canadians think they're right, of course."

"Isn't that confusing?" Garry had finished his first sandwich and begun another. He found them delicious, the bread toasted brown, the butter melted, and the meat hot.

"No. The fishermen sell their fish as pickerel to the American buyers. They sell it as pike to their consumers." Nick stretched out on the soft sand beside the fire. "You mentioned summer work. Nets have to be lifted every once in a while and spread on the reels to dry. Torn ones have to be mended."

"Are nylon nets better than cotton?"

"Fishermen don't agree. Nylon nets cost more, but they last longer. They don't rot so quickly in water and don't need so much mending, but they tangle worse. Tough fighters like pike tear holes in older cotton nets and escape, but in nylon nets they get so tangled it's a heck of a job to get them out."

The fire had gone out, and they started for home. "I hear you're going to college," said Nick. "My old man wanted me to go on after High, but I like to be out in the open. I like fishing and think I'll stick to it. It's hard starting from scratch, but the old man has a lot of money tied up in fishing gear, and it'll come to me later."

Garry had enjoyed this hike with Nick. That evening the Boss told the men he thought the ice was safe enough for setting test nets in order to locate the fish runs. "The ice isn't trustworthy yet for the 'bom'. We'll have to haul the sleds ourselves. You, Bergur, pick a partner. I want you to take the dogs and go a few miles past Spruce Point and sink nets there. Three winters ago it was our best spot. Last year it was poor, but one never knows. I want to give it a try."

There was a sense of urgency about the men next morning; it was a relief to begin the real work at last, to go fishing. They gulped down their breakfast and

went outside. It was calm and cold. In the murky pre-dawn darkness, the men, carrying lanterns, lugged troughs and boxes of nets and other gear to the sleds. Bergur had picked Garry as his partner, and Garry was pleased; he liked the wood carver. He helped load their sled with nets, two four-foot-handled chisels, two spades, a jigger, and one gunny sack containing fresh supplies of woollen mitts, another with sharp-pointed stakes or anchor posts.

There was the sound of joking and laughter as the men started off, hauling the sleds. One by one, Bergur brought the dogs by the scruff of the neck and harnessed them. They were excited about going, after being tethered so long.

"Who takes care of the dogs?" Garry asked.

"I feed them," Bergur said. "That's all the care they need. I like dogs."

"These are beauties."

"They're a good string of dogs," Bergur said, "and well trained. Trust the Boss for that." He took the lead-dog, Taktu, by the collar. "You steady the sled as I lead them down the bank."

The lake ice was smooth and slippery. Bergur told Garry to ride; he stood on the protruding runners.

"Marchaw!" he shouted, cracking the whip. The dogs lunged into their harness and, with bushy tails curved over their backs, raced along the ice. They slithered and slipped and soon were brought down to a steady trot. A thrill of excitement gripped Garry. He understood why the Boss liked working with his dogs. And at last he was going to learn how to set a net through ice.

The sun came up like a red balloon seen through mist. Though there was a mile-wide strip of ice along the shore, the main body of the lake was unfrozen and vapour rose from it like smoke from a ground fire.

Passing Spruce Point, they went on for about two miles, and then Bergur halted the dogs. "We'll make the first basin-hole here," he said, picking up the two chisels and handing one to Garry. "You face me and stand close," he said.

Garry grasped the long-handled chisel with both hands and, watching Bergur, began hacking the ice. It was only a foot in thickness, and soon they had a hole three feet in diameter. That finished, Bergur scooped out the floating ice chunks with the shovel and tossed them in a pile.

"Why do you pile the ice?" Garry wanted to know.

Bergur grinned. "Ice chunks frozen to the ice are a good way to stub a toe," he said. "By the end of the season the ice pile by a basin-hole will be three feet high."

That's a good idea, Garry thought. It would be hard to work around here with ice chunks scattered about.

"Now I'll use the jigger," Bergur said, taking the thin plank from the sled. It had a gadget at one end with a string attached and an eye-bolt at the other. Bergur tied the net rope to the eye-bolt, and then, kneeling on one knee, he scuttled the jigger, aiming it towards shore. The plank shot down and forward; then came to rest some distance away. They chiselled a small hole, and Bergur withdrew the jigger. He scuttled it again in the same direction. This he repeated a number of times; then looking back toward the basin-hole, he said,

"I think this is about a net length. Setting nets when the ice is thin and when you can see the jigger is easy. If you don't find a fish-run, though, you have to move the nets, usually when the ice has grown thick; then we do this." He jiggled the string and Garry heard tapping beneath the ice. "We cut a hole where we think the sound came from. Sometimes it can be tricky."

"This jigger," Garry said, "is a good idea."

"Couldn't set nets in winter without it."

"Whoever invented it was clever."

"Yeah. My great-grandfather came from Iceland in 1876. He had never seen a frozen lake or even a pond. He got a net, but had no idea how to set it through ice. A friendly Indian showed him how and gave him a home-made jigger to use. My great-grandfather thought the Indians had invented it. Now it's manufactured and sold in all fishing-gear stores."

They cut a hole and withdrew the jigger. "This is the anchor-hole," Bergur said. "The guide line of the net is tied to the anchor post."

In his mind Garry was going over all these new terms; he might have to use them and didn't want to make a mistake.

"I'll go to the basin-hole and pay out the net. You haul it by the guide line." He walked over to the first hole, knelt down, and slipped the net into the water, floats with one hand, sinkers with the other, taking care the net did not tangle. Garry pulled it along beneath the ice by the rope.

"Here it is," he called out catching sight of the net.

Bergur came over. With a small sledge hammer he

drove a short, sharp-pointed stake into the ice and tied the guide rope to it. "Now we do it all over again for another net," he said, as they walked back to the basin hole. "This time you scuttle the jigger."

Garry knelt, grasped the jigger in his right hand, and tossed it into the basin-hole. He watched anxiously for it to appear beneath the ice. It did — a few feet away, at an angle of 45 degrees to the first net.

Bergur burst into laughter. "The nets have to be set in a straight line." He pulled the jigger out and scuttled it. "It takes a knack," he said, "but you'll get onto it with a little practice."

They kept on working, scuttling the jigger, making new holes, setting nets. Then Bergur said, "This time you pay out the net: floats in one hand, sinkers in the other, and be careful not to foul the net."

Garry felt pride in this work; he managed it very well. At noon Bergur built a small fire with wood he had brought, and they toasted their sandwiches, which were frozen, and then drank lake water from a collapsible cup. A wind came up in the afternoon. They worked hurriedly and in silence. The dogs were cold and were just as eager on the return trip as they had been in the morning. Garry enjoyed the ride back to camp. He felt satisfied with the day's work; he had learned a great deal. True, he was not an expert like his partner, but with practice he could be. Taking the fish from a net would be something else. He hoped he wouldn't be too clumsy. But suppose there were no fish — they hadn't found a run. That would mean their day's work was wasted. Garry could hardly wait till morning to find out how much fish the nets held.

Chapter Seven

The men joked and laughed as they waited their turn to wash up that evening. All except Nick; he complained of toothache.

"Didn't you go to the dentist as I told you?" his father asked, frowning.

"Naw," Nick said irritably. "It just bothered me that once. I forgot about it."

"A fishing camp is no place for a man with a toothache." The Boss stepped to a shelf, took down a large tin box, found a bottle, and shook out two aspirin. "Take these," he said; "they'll ease the pain. Better lie down and keep warm."

"I'll be all right." Nick went to the bunkroom.

As the men were sitting down to supper, Nick came back saying his toothache was gone, but before bedtime he complained again.

"Maybe if you lie down and keep still, it'll go away," Tim told him.

The two went to the bunkroom. A short time later Garry went there to get a book. He saw both lying on their bunks and both were smoking, in spite of strict orders from the Boss not to smoke in the bunkroom.

"Feeling better Nick?" he said.

"Never felt better," Nick replied with a giggle. "I'm okay."

Garry had never seen the two so chummy. But they're fishing partners, he thought, and working together will make people either friends or enemies.

Next morning there was a real nor'easter blowing, whipping the lake into huge waves. The Boss had been the first one up and outside. Now he came back. "There was a gale all night and it's still blowing. As long as the wind doesn't change direction, though, it won't be dangerous. We'll go and see what the test nets have to tell."

When Garry went outside, he caught his first glimpse of pressure ice piling against the lake shore. Although there are no regular tides on Lake Winnipeg, a steady gale from one direction for days will force the water to one end of the lake and raise the level at this end by as much as two feet. This was happening now. The level of the lake had risen, loosening the shore-fast ice and pushing relentlessly against the shore, and crushing it with a crackling, growling noise.

The men had difficulty getting their sleds across this ice ridge. Bergur and Garry had even more difficulty than the others because they had the dogs as well, but no one worried. All were impatient and excited about getting to the test nets. Had they located the all-important fish-runs?

When they reached the first basin-hole, Bergur halted the dogs, and they lay down and began licking their paws. Their pads hadn't toughened and hardened yet. Taking the chisels, Bergur and Garry opened the holes and began withdrawing the net. It was loaded with fish! They had found a good run! Both young men were jubilant.

With thick mitts on his hands, Garry found releasing the slimy, squirming fish awkward and he lagged behind Bergur. As they unloaded the net, the mesh froze and was piled loosely on the ice. When they had finished unloading, Garry hauled the net back into the lake again pulling on the guide line from the anchor-hole. Then he retied the guide rope to the anchor post. This they repeated many times. When their mitts grew wet, and their hands cold, they changed to dry mitts kept in a gunny sack in the sled.

By noon, the wind had changed from nor'east to north and by mid afternoon it had swung to the west, still blowing hard.

"If this wind keeps up," Bergur said, frowning, "it'll blow the ice to the middle of the lake."

In spite of this fear, they went on working. They still hadn't finished when the dogs, which had been sleeping balls of fur, raised their heads, and Taktu, the lead-dog, rose to his feet and sniffed the air, and then whimpered deep in his throat.

"Something's wrong," Bergur said, watching the dogs. "The dogs act queer. They're nervous. Let's go." Hurredly, the chisels, shovels, and sacks were tossed on top of the loaded sled. Picking up the guy rope, Bergur cracked the whip and shouted a command.

Instantly the dogs bolted; the guy rope was yanked from Bergur's hold. He yelled at the dogs to stop, but they ran on heedlessly. Both the young men ran, but couldn't catch up to the frenzied dogs. Garry remembered his uncle saying that a lead dog, knowing he was more than a whip-length ahead of his master, would often, with quick glances to the rear, keep that distance ahead. Dogs had been known to keep a master running at a safe distance for miles. This seemed to be happening now.

Cracking the whip threateningly, Bergur shouted at the dogs to halt, but they paid no attention to him. Garry had a stitch in his side, was almost winded. The young men slowed to a fast walk. At once the dogs sensed it and cut their speed. After a while Bergur said, "Let's try again." They started sprinting, and sure enough, the lead dog, Taktu, broke into a gallop.

The ice was slippery for both dogs and men, and Bergur took a bad tumble. Sensing that, the dogs slowed down; and Garry took a flying leap, landed with a slide, and caught the trailing guy rope. Realizing he was once more in man's power, Taktu stopped. The dogs slumped down on the ice, their tongues lolling, panting for breath. Taktu gave Garry a worried glance. He knew he deserved to be punished.

But this time Taktu did not get a whipping. Bergur limped up. "I twisted my right ankle," he said. "Roll out the fish, and we'll pick them up later. I'll have to ride. You devil," he addressed Taktu. "I bet you wouldn't have played this trick on the Boss."

Turning the sled on its side Garry dumped out the fish. He threw in the chisels, shovels, and gunny sacks.

Bergur climbed in handing the whip to Garry. "You drive," he said.

Would the dogs obey him? Could he crack that heavy whip? "Marchaw!" he shouted, cracking the whip with a rifle like report. The dogs plunged forward and Garry ran with the whip in one hand, the guy rope wrapped around the other. In spite of slippery footing, the dogs kept up a steady gallop as if they realized time was precious. Garry tired and his breath came in gasps, but he knew he must keep going.

"Whoa!" Berger suddenly shouted raising himself in the sled as the dogs obeyed. "Garry, isn't that water between the ice and shore?"

His mittened hand shading his eyes Garry peered toward shore. He could see clearly a strip of water between the ice and the lake shore. "Yeah," he said, his voice not quite steady. "There is water, all right. But it doesn't look wide. Maybe we can jump across."

"Not a chance," Bergur replied tonelessly. "When you see it at this distance, it's too far to jump."

This time the dogs did not flop down and rest, but stood waiting for the command to go. The two men stared with fear in their eyes at the island, so near, yet so inaccessible.

"The wind has gone to west-sou'west," Bergur said. "No sense trying for shore here. Maybe the ice is still clinging to Spruce Point. Let's make a dash for that."

The dogs seemed to understand. Without a command or a crack of the whip, they started off at a furious gallop. Garry ran behind until his knees threatened to buckle; then he threw himself into the sled, but even with the added weight the dogs did not slacken speed.

Suddenly there was an ear-splitting report. The dogs hesitated, cringed for a second, Taktu stole a backward glance at the men, and then they were off on that mile-eating gallop again.

Both Bergur and Garry knew what that report had meant. Somewhere the sheet of ice they were marooned on had split. They also knew that when a sheet of ice breaks up into smaller floes, the action of wind and waves will grind them and pile them on top of each other. Garry feared their mad run would be useless. As far as he could see the ice had broken from shore. Attempting to swim across in the freezing water would be madness.

Garry halted the dogs. This time they flopped down, panting. "What can we do?" he asked desperately, taking a few steps forward and staring at the island. Somehow, he couldn't accept the situation as hopeless. "Maybe the men will rescue us on the skiff," he said. "The outboard motor is in good shape."

"Yeah, maybe," Bergur said morosely, "if they got off the ice themselves."

"They were so much closer to shore. They must have made it."

Garry sat down on the sled rail. He tried to think of a plan, for there must be a way to get off this floe, but his mind refused to work. Again there was a loud, crackling noise. He hunched his shoulders, fearing the ice might split beneath him.

Suddenly an idea flashed into his mind! He jumped to his feet and paced about. The dogs watched him expectantly, but his partner stared into space. Maybe the idea was no good. Maybe it wouldn't work, but

anything was better than just sitting here waiting for the worst. Again he sat down on the sled rail. He would tell his partner his plan. Maybe it was impossible; maybe it was insane, but anything was better than just waiting.

Chapter Eight

Garry watched his partner for a minute in silence, and then said tensely, "Bergur, a small floe or chunk of ice would ride the swells. The waves wouldn't split it." He waited for his companion to reply; when he didn't, Garry went on. "Let's chisel ourselves a raft."

Bergur looked up, his mouth opened, he swallowed, and then he exclaimed, "Boy, that's a good idea! How'd you think of it?"

"Let's cut a raft the shape of a triangle," Garry said, picking up the chisels and handing one to Bergur.

"It mustn't be too small." Bergur's face twisted with pain as he got up from the sled.

"But if it is too big it might split."

"If too small, it might capsize," Bergur said.

"That's right. It must be a fair size."

They discussed the size and decided on a triangle with a base of forty feet and sides about eighty feet.

Using the four-foot chisel handle as a measuring stick, Garry measured off the piece, scratching the ice where it was to be cut. They started hacking the ice at the same place, the apex, and then branched off each following one side of the triangle. It was backbreaking work and cold, for the strong wind seemed to seep through their clothing. Garry finished first and then helped Bergur with his side. When it was finished, Bergur hobbled back to the sled and sat down on the rail.

Garry went to the apex and, using the chisel as a pole, tried to push the ice they were on away from the main floe. It wouldn't move. It clung to the main ice like a fitted piece of a jigsaw puzzle. He rested and tried again. He pushed and strained.

"It won't budge," he told Bergur. "I guess we'll have to cut a narrow channel around it."

"That's a lot of work. It'll take time."

"What's time on an ice-floe?" Garry said lightly. He wished Bergur would show more enthusiasm. "We have all kinds of time. Let's try."

Bergur didn't move. Garry knew how he felt; he was cold and tired, his ankle pained, and he was worried. "It's a fighting chance. Come and help me," Garry coaxed.

Slowly, with the aid of a chisel, Bergur rose to his feet and hobbled to the apex of the triangular piece of ice and on his knees began hacking away to form a channel. With renewed energy Garry worked on the other channel. When both were finished Garry pushed their raft away from the large floe.

Bergur crawled back to the sled and climbed in.

Garry sat on the rail. "I don't think this small floe will split. If we aren't rescued, we can ride it across the lake." He chuckled dryly.

Bergur sat hunched with his arms wrapped around his knees, his head almost resting on them. Without glancing up, he said, "Here, Lake Winnipeg is almost forty miles across." When his companion didn't answer, he went on. "The lake covers 9,500 square miles. That's a lot of water to float around in. With changing winds we'd be pushed back and forth and never reach any shore."

Bergur's despondent mood began to affect Garry. Now he too felt it was hopeless. He watched the gap between the two floes grow smaller by the minute until their floe touched the big one with a crunching sound. He stood up and pushed their floe away. This had happened a number of times when Bergur said, "You can't keep this up all night." He was silent for a while, and then he said abruptly. "Unharness the dogs."

They gazed at each other for a long second. They read each other's minds. They knew that they would likely find death in the deep cold water, but felt that the dogs should not be hindered in their struggle, by harness and sled.

"You're right," Garry said, standing up. "They should be given a fighting chance."

All this time the dogs had lain quietly, either sleeping or watching the men. As Garry began unharnessing the wheel-dog, they all stood up, wagging their tails, glad that at last they were getting attention.

"We sure are in a fix," Garry told Taktu, as he un-

buckled the belly band and slipped off the collar. "This is all I can do for you, boy. The rest is up to you."

Taktu shook himself and rubbed his furry head against Garry's leg. When Garry sat down again, the dog lay down at his feet. Stroking Taktu's head Garry stared longingly at the island. The sun was setting behind the tree-serrated horizon. Soon it would be dark. It would be a long, cold night. He listened intently, still hoping that the men would come and rescue them in the skiff. With the outboard motor, it could skim over the lake and reach camp in half an hour. Even in a paddled canoe one could reach shore in — "Hey Bergur!" he cried excitedly. "It wouldn't take long to paddle to shore."

Bergur looked at him with disgust. "You gone bushed? We have no canoe and no paddles so —"

"We have two shovels!" Garry jumped to his feet and picked one up. "Don't you see? We can use the shovels for paddles!"

"Garry," Bergur said in a shaking voice, "what made you think of the shovels? I'd forgotten them. Of course we can use them as paddles."

For the first time, they really felt hopeful. With light hearts, they knelt on either side of the small floe: Garry on the right, Bergur on the left. They turned the floe so that the apex faced toward shore. Garry dug the shovel in deep and pulled hard. After a time he turned his head and saw that the gap between them and the main floe had widened. He looked toward shore, but that gap was immense. There was no use thinking about it. He lengthened his stroke, throwing every ounce of weight and strength into each thrust of the shovel.

The elation and hope lasted a long time, but when complete darkness surrounded them, Garry became aware of the biting wind and of his tiredness. His shoulders ached, and his hands and feet were numb with cold. His mitts were wet and he intended to replace them with dry ones from the gunny sack, but when he tried to stand up, he couldn't. His pants knees were frozen to the ice. In panic, he threw himself sideways and his legs came free. Stepping across to Bergur, he helped him to his feet.

"We mustn't paddle for such a long stretch," Garry said. "Every once in a while we must stand up, stretch, and change places."

They stood there with their backs to the wind, supporting each other. Garry strained to see across the waste of water, trying to locate the large floe, so that he might gage how far they had paddled. It was then that he saw a light bobbing up and down in the distance.

His heart thumped his ribs; he rubbed his eyes; he still saw the light. Someone with a lantern was walking along the large floe.

"Look" he shouted. "A light! Can you see it?"

"Yeah," Bergur said, "I see it. It's a lantern, two of them; one going south, the other north. It's the men looking for us on the floe."

They shouted and yelled until they were hoarse. "If we could build a fire," Garry said. "Give me your lighter."

With shaking fingers, Garry tried to light a number of things, but everything was damp: the mitts, the gunny sacks, and the wood. He couldn't get anything to blaze; the wind blew out the lighter. After a time

the two lanterns drew together and then disappeared. The men had given up the search for them and gone back in the skiff.

"Maybe we'd have been better off staying on the big floe," Garry remarked.

"Can't tell what might have happened where we were. The men weren't near there, too far south. Anyway, we couldn't be sure they'd reached shore. We're better off here."

Knowing that their friends were safe, the two young men felt a return of confidence.

"Let's start paddling again," Bergur said.

When Garry knelt to his shovel, Taktu came and stood beside him. Garry felt his body quivering; he knew the dog had heard the men on the other floe, might have smelled them even, and likely still heard their motor. He listened intently, but heard no sound except an occasional grinding of ice. He dug his shovel into the water and pulled hard. After a time he and Bergur exchanged wet mitts for dry ones and changed places.

"The wind's going down," Garry said.

"I've noticed that. It'll help." Then Bergur added, "Our best bet is to try for Spruce Point. If we swing past that —"

"I get you. We'll make it," Garry told him hopefully.

Garry lost track of time, but he carried on the motion of paddling. He was so cold and tired, though, he wasn't sure there was any power behind his paddling, that the floe was moving at all. Waves splashed his mitts; he knew he should exchange them for dry ones, stand up and stretch, and change places with Bergur, but it seemed too much bother.

Something touched his shoulder. Taktu was standing beside him, quivering. Glancing about, he saw the other dogs all standing on the bow end of the floe.

"Bergur!" he cried excitedly. "The dogs act as if we're close to shore."

Bergur didn't answer at first. Then he said, "The dogs are sure to know. We must be close."

They paddled with new energy. When the floe struck the shore rocks with a slight bump, Garry wanted to shout for joy. The dogs all jumped ashore and disappeared, except Taktu who waited for the men. Helping Bergur off the floe, Garry slipped, and they both stumbled into the icy water up past their knees. Climbing over the pressure ice was not easy, but they managed it and stood clinging and pounding each other.

"We're safe!" Bergur shouted.

"We'll have to get out of the wind. Think you can walk up to the trees?"

"If I can't walk, I can creep."

"You big baby," Garry said.

They both burst into laughter. But later, when they had reached a small clearing ringed in by spruce trees, Garry saw no humour in their situation. True, they were off the floe, but both were wet and, if not rescued soon, were in danger of freezing.

Chapter Nine

The wind had vacuumed the sky clear of clouds. There was no moon, but it wasn't dark. Millions of stars twinkled in the dark blue heavens, and northern lights sent flashes of rainbow colours shimmering overhead. The wind soughed through the evergreens, and it was very cold.

Garry and Bergur were sitting on a carpet of spruce needles. "Hand over your lighter," Garry said. "I'll build a fire. We need the warmth, and the men might see it."

Drawing off his mitt and fumbling in his parka pocket, Bergur brought out the cigarette lighter and handed it to his companion. "A fire," he said through chattering teeth, "would feel good, but I'm not sure the men would see it."

If only I had some paper, Garry thought, or birch bark, but he didn't see a birch tree among the surrounding trees. Beside him was a big spruce, and he knew

there must be dry old cones beneath it. He made a pile of these cones and touched the lighter to its base; some of them flared but they didn't catch fire. He scooped spruce needles together and tried to light them. They caught fire and he fed it cones one by one, and then swept on needles and cones and had a good blaze. He broke the lower dead branches off the tree and fed them to the flames. Now he had a small fire burning.

However the light from this fire would not show above the tree tops. Garry needed a big blaze that would cast a glow in the sky. He had an idea; it was worth trying. He bent one of the tree branches down to the flame. It was green and frozen, and he doubted it would catch fire, but suddenly it exploded into flame. Garry stepped back and happily watched the flames run up the branches above. They licked the resin beads on the trunk and soon the whole tree was a blazing beacon. Tongues of flame and sparks shot skyward.

"This fire will show for miles," he said exultantly.

"It sure will," Bergur, lying on his side, said, "but will any of the men be outside to see it?"

It was wonderful while it lasted, giving off light and intense heat, but after a while the branches were all gone, and the green trunk held only patches of embers where the resin was still burning. Bergur is right, Garry thought, there is only a small chance that some of the men were outside and saw the blaze. He knew he should do it all over again with another tree for a blazing beacon, but he felt very tired and thought he would rest a little while before tackling it.

Lying on the soft needles, he must have dozed, for he was awakened suddenly by a sharp bark from Taktu.

He shook his companion. "Wake up, Bergur. Someone must be coming. Taktu ran away barking."

Bergur pulled himself to a sitting position, shivered, and said, "Likely ran after a coyote." He lay down again.

"Don't go to sleep again. Try to stay awake," Garry begged. Bergur didn't answer; he was already asleep.

Taktu returned from his run and curled up beside Garry. Sleeping out in this cold is dangerous, Garry thought. I must get up and build another fire, but he didn't. He too fell asleep. Again he was awakened by Taktu barking and running out of the clearing. Must be another coyote, Garry thought, or maybe the same one. He dozed off, but was awakened once more by the dog clawing at his clothes. Garry sat up and saw the Boss and Gunnar, carrying lanterns, standing at the edge of the clearing. He couldn't believe his eyes: he thought it was only a dream. Then he realized the men were real and stumbled to his feet.

"Bergur, wake up!" he shouted. "They've come for us."

"Are you all right?" the Boss said, holding up the lantern and scrutinizing Garry's face. Then he swung the lantern so that he could see Bergur. "Thank God you're safe," he said.

The Boss and Gunnar supported Bergur down to the skiff. Garry's feet were without feeling as he stumbled down the short distance. Before they took off, Taktu jumped aboard. Never had Garry heard such a pleasant sound as the hum of the outboard motor as they skimmed along the lakeshore to camp. Everyone was down at the dock to greet them, except Nick, who was tired

after his experience on the ice and had taken to his bunk and Petur, who was busy cooking a hot meal. Never had the Aladdin lamp given a more cheerful light, nor the room a more welcome warmth, and never had the smell of food been more delicious. Garry was brimful with thankfulness at being in camp again.

No questions had been asked on the way and none were asked now. The men were more concerned with the castaways' well-being than with their adventure. Their wet clothing was quickly removed, and wool underwear slipped on. Their hands, knees, and feet were examined and found frost-bitten, but not seriously, which put everyone in a happy mood. With joking and hilarity, their frost-bites were smeared with cooling salve, and Bergur's ankle was bandaged, and then they were wrapped in wool blankets.

Petur placed a heaping platter of beefsteak, and bread and butter, and a pot of coffee on the table. Some of the men had missed supper; others had had small appetites. Now all did full justice to Petur's food.

When the meal was over the Boss turned to Bergur. "Now tell us how you managed to get to shore," he said.

Bergur sat in a chair with his bandaged foot resting on a bench. His red hair had grown and the ends were beginning to curl, his supple wood-carving hands were red and swollen, his blue eyes held a strange expression. The men watched him expectantly, waiting for his explanation.

"With the chisels," he told them, "we cut a small floe out of the big one."

"A good idea," Gunnar said, his face puckered in a

frown. "But how did you manage to get it to shore?"

Wasn't Bergur going to tell who's idea it was? Was he going to take all the credit for it, Garry wondered?

"We used the shovels for paddles and paddled it to shore," Bergur said.

"Ah," the Boss said smiling. "I guessed as much. One time I was caught on a moving floe. I did the same thing, steered and paddled it to shore with a shovel, but I was close to shore." He chuckled. "I sure thought I was smart to think of it, and I think you showed a cool mind to be able to think clearly and act quickly when you found yourself in such a fix."

"Yeah," Bergur said, his lips twisting in a wry grin. "It sure was clever. Very smart." His voice rose as he went on. "But I wasn't the one who did it." He smiled broadly and pointed to Garry. "There's the clever one. It was this greenhorn, who knows nothing about fishing on this lake, who was cool-headed and smart. If it weren't for him, we'd be at the bottom of the lake."

Bergur didn't take any credit. Garry felt all eyes on him. It was a bit embarrassing. At first their faces reflected astonishment and disbelief that a new hand had proved better in a lake accident than an experienced — though this was only Bergur's second winter — man. Then their faces beamed with pleasure and approval. Garry knew that this time he had measured up to their standards and he felt elated.

"I thought of chiselling the ice floe and using the shovels for paddles," he said, "but there was more to it than that. Paddling was hard work, and Bergur, though his ankle pained, worked just as hard as I did."

"Aw," Bergur said, "shut up, can't you. I also want

you all to know that it was Garry who lit the spruce tree. I was just a stupe; I was scared out of my wits."

"You both deserve much credit," the Boss said. "You had us worried. All day I watched wind direction and when it swung to the west, I knew what to expect. We headed for shore and just made it; we had to jump across a narrow strip of water. Seeing you had the dogs, I expected you to beat us."

"Just carelessness," Bergur said. He moved his foot as if it pained. "When the dogs acted nervous, we should have guessed why and beat it to shore."

"When we didn't find you here," Thor said, "we planned to get you off the ice in a skiff, but the minute we placed her in the water, we found her leaking like a sieve. We had to take her into the cabin, pry out the old oakum, pack in new, and then paint it over with tar. That stopped the leak."

"It all took time," Tim said. He had been pale and sallow when Garry had first seen him, but now he had a ruddy, weather-beaten tinge. "It was dark before the boat was ready. I stood on the dock and watched her go. It seemed hopeless looking for you on the ice in the dark." A slight shudder went over him. "And the ice was crackling and grinding. It was terrible when the skiff came back without you."

"No one was happy," said Petur, "but no one lost hope."

"We kept hearing noises outside," Gunnar said, "and would go out and have a look around. The time I found the dogs, I gave a shout and everyone rushed out. We saw the dogs were dry, and hoped that you had reached dry land, but we didn't know where to look for you."

Then all of a sudden we saw that blaze above the trees and knew you were on Spruce Point."

"And were we glad!" said Phil. "Gunnar and I rushed to the skiff with the motor."

Gunnar laughed. "And do you think I could start that darn motor. It had been in the cabin and was warm and should have started easy, but it didn't. I thought it never would catch. I must have flooded the carburetor in my hurry."

He laughed again, and the men joined him, but at the time it had been anything but amusing.

"Setting fire to that spruce was a smart idea," Thor said.

"It sure was," said the Boss. "And when the skiff touched shore, there was Taktu to lead us to you."

"He's a good dog," Garry said, remembering how he had stayed with them.

"Anyone fed the dogs?" Bergur said suddenly.

"That's your job," Thor said laughing, "but this time I'll look after them." He went out of doors.

A little later they all went to the bunkroom and to bed. Garry stayed awake for a long time. His knees, fingers, and toes tingled and smarted, but not enough to keep him awake. His mind was too busy for sleep. He thought of his experience, from the time he realized the ice was moving to the time he got back to the cabin. He marvelled at his escape from death and could hardly believe that he was safe in his bunk. He and Bergur had been victorious, and he felt exhilarated. He thought about the men who once again had come to grips with the elements. And he thought of the Boss. Not once had he mentioned his loss of nets; all his concern had

been for his men. When he found them unharmed, nothing else mattered. Nets could be replaced but not human life.

Now they would have to wait until the lake froze again. Garry wondered what they would do during that time.

Chapter Ten

It was still and cold. The smoke from the two chimneys rose straight and high. A narrow strip of shore ice had formed again, but the main body of the lake was unfrozen and covered by a thin mist. The men viewed this with satisfaction. A few days of such weather would cover the lake with ice, and a few days after that the ice would be thick and solid.

The men spent their time in different ways. Bergur, with his bandaged foot resting on a box, sandpapered and hand-rubbed his figurine; the Boss worked on a jigsaw puzzle; Gunnar spent long spells playing the accordion; and Thor, with a sailor's palm on his hand, stitched heavy canvas to the legs of a pair of ski pants. He said the old time fishermen had sewn canvas on their pants and he found it the best way to keep the wind out. Phil, who didn't like to be called a D.P., worked on his lessons in English; Tim, who now had shaved his sideburns leaving lighter strips down his cheeks where the wind and sun had not tanned them,

was sprawled in a deck-chair reading an ancient adventure magazine; Nick was acting in a strange way. He was either silent and morose, or bursting into wild laughter. Among themselves, the men talked about his queer behaviour. Some of them thought he was going bush-wacky, a form of insanity brought on by being alone in the wilderness. But Nick was not alone: he was in pleasant company.

Garry was looking over the books and pamphlets in the bookcase for something to read

"There are a number of books and government reports on fish and the fishing industry," the Boss said. "You can learn a lot from them."

Garry was surprised to find such material in a fishing camp. He knew most farmers kept abreast of new methods of farming and handling their products, but he had not known that fishermen also kept abreast of the times. He picked up the latest *Annual Report* published by the Department of Mines and Natural Resources, sat down, and began studying it.

After reading for a while, he said, "It says here that 19 million pounds of fish were taken from Lake Winnipeg last year and 36 million pounds were fished from Manitoba lakes."

"That's a lot of fish," Tim said.

"And a lot of food," the Boss said.

"How many men are fishing?" Tim wanted to know.

"There are 3,100 men employed at fishing in Manitoba," Garry told him.

"How big is Lake Winnipeg?" Phil asked.

Garry turned back a few pages and found what he wanted. "The surface area is 9,500 square miles."

"Wow! Is it that big?" Tim said in surprise.

"Our lake is no duck pond," Garry said.

"Out of all these millions of pounds of fish," Tim said, "how many come from this lake?"

"There were 6 million pounds of pickerel, 4 million pounds of saugers, 3 million pounds of white fish, 2 million tullibee, and lesser amounts of other fish. There were 19 million in all."

"How many kinds of fish are there in this lake?" said Tim.

"It gives 12 different species here; bass, bullhead, carp, catfish, goldeye, perch, pickerel, pike, saugers, suckers, tullibee, and whitefish."

"I never even heard of some of them," Tim said.

"They missed one, maria," said Petur, who was standing by the cook stove frying meat and listening.

"Ha," said Bergur disgustedly, looking up from his carving, "you might as well forget that fish. It's no good to anybody. Even a sled dog won't eat it if he can get anything else."

"The maria has one good thing, its very large liver," Petur said stubbornly. "In pioneer times people made liver sausage from maria liver. It tasted good and it was good for people to get liver."

"There is sale for all fish now," the Boss said. "The world is short of food. Once one couldn't give suckers and maria away, but now there is a small demand for them."

"There is still another fish not on that list," said Thor. "It's mooneye. It's a little larger than goldeye, but doesn't taste as good. When it's smoked, it's hard to tell it from real goldeye and it's sold as such."

The next few days both Garry and Tim studied the books about fish. Garry found it interesting. On the fourth day of their enforced idleness, the men had just sat down to their noonday meal when there was an excited barrage of barking from the sled dogs.

"Someone is coming by dog train," Petur said.

The men waited tense, listening, wondering who it could be; they had had no visitors and were not expecting any. Without a knock, the door opened, and an Indian stepped inside. He was tall and lean; his face was long with high cheek-bones, his nose hooked, his eyes black and bright, and his skin was the colour of spruce bark.

The Boss stood up from the table and met the man with outstretched hand. "Hello, Mandamin," he said cheerfully. "Set in. We're just about to eat. Petur, another plate."

The Indian sat down at the end of the table and began piling food on his plate.

"How is everything?" the Boss asked, helping himself to meat from the platter.

"Not good," the Indian said, chewing on his food.

"You lose nets?"

"No."

"That's fine."

Everyone was busy eating. No one spoke for a while. Then the Boss said. "You been sick, Mandamin?"

"No," the Indian replied.

"What's the matter then?"

"My woman sick. Now at Norway House hospital. Me alone with four kids. No good. First I take kids trappin' an' fishin'. Now I can't."

"Why not?" the Boss wanted to know.

"One kid burn hisself on hot water. Very sick. Can't do nothin'. Can't leave him."

"I'm sorry to hear that." The Boss passed the man the platter of meat. "But you did leave him to come here?"

"No."

"What do you mean 'No'?" the Boss said a little harshly.

"Got kid with me. Him outside."

"In this cold?" Garry said, in shocked surprise.

Mandamin shot a glance at Garry; then resumed eating.

"Indian kids don't feel cold or pain," Nick said sulkily. "They're too stupid."

"Nick, to talk like that isn't like you. Besides, you're wrong. Indians have the same feelings as anyone else." The Boss turned to Mandamin. "Can we help you in any way."

"You're good men. I leave kid with you. He gets better, I come get him."

"He's on a spot." The Boss looked from one to another of his men. "He can't take a sick child hunting, trapping, or fishing. With his wife away, what's he to do? Shall we take the child?"

"We too are working," Bergur said. "We can't stay around camp nursing a sick child. Besides, who knows what to do for it?"

"Indians have medicine men to cure them," Nick argued. "They have free hospitalization. Why should we be bothered with his kid?"

"How's the child to get to the hospital?" the Boss said harshly.

"The kid will keep us awake nights with his crying," Gunnar said.

"Well, if you are all against it," the Boss said, "I'll tell the father we can't keep his sick child."

All during this conversation the Indian went on eating. He was on his third helping of raisin pie, washing it down with tea. His dark face was impassive and expressionless as if he didn't understand a word of what was being said or, if he understood, didn't care.

"That baby must be cold," Garry said. "I think it should be brought in and fed."

"A good idea," the Boss said. "I'm sorry, Mandamin, but we can't take care of your child. We're working. Bring it in out of the cold, though, and we'll give it some food."

"Okay," the father said. He gulped the last of his tea, wiped his mouth with the back of his hand, stood up, and went outside.

"The crust of him," Nick said, "expecting us to take care of his sick kid."

"What's wrong with that?" Petur scowled at Nick. "On the lake everybody helps one another. In the old days we used to help much more than now. We gave our time, money, food if someone was in need. And Indians have been helpful to 'Whites'. They have saved many a 'White' life."

The Boss held the door open as the Indian entered carrying a child wrapped in a blanket. Petur indicated the cot and spoke to the father in Cree. The Indian put the child down, and then, without a glance at anyone, left the room. Seconds later they heard the crack of a whip and the jingle of sleigh bells.

"He's gone," Thor said in surprise. "He's gone and left the child."

There was a twinkle in the Boss' eyes as he glanced knowingly at Petur. The old cook shrugged and his lips twisted into a grin. He began stacking the dirty dishes.

"The old so and so," Nick exploded. "He thinks he's smart putting one over on us."

"Of course he's smart," the Boss chuckled. "Indians are much more intelligent and shrewd and understanding than some people think. Mandamin knows we wouldn't ill-treat or neglect his sick child. He knows we'll do the best we can for it." He stepped over to the cot and looked down. "I wonder if it's a boy or a girl."

"He's a boy," Petur told him, "three years old. His leg got scalded by hot water."

"What's his name?" Phil wanted to know.

"Dunno," Petur said. "Never asked."

"Well, Little Chief," the Boss addressed the boy, "I think we should take a look at that leg." With gentle hands, he unzipped the worn parka and slipped it off, and then took off the patched overalls.

The men stood around and stared down at the boy.

"Stop staring at him," Petur said irritably. "Keep talking. Animals and little children get scared if strange people stare at them and say nothing."

"He is right," Phil said. "Let's talk and laugh so he won't think we are worried about him, and then he won't get frightened."

The men still stared, but they joked and laughed until the Boss had rolled up the patched underwear and removed a soiled bandage. Then they stared in silence,

for the small leg had an angry sore reaching from the middle thigh down to the ankle and it was covered with an ooze of green matter.

"It looks like gangrene!" Thor cried in horror.

"Nonsense," the Boss told him, patting the boy's shoulder. "There's a thermometer in the medicine box. Someone fetch it."

Thor found the clinical thermometer, shook it down, disinfected it in a bottle of alcohol, and placed it beneath the boy's tongue, holding his lips together.

"How long will it take," Gunnar said.

"I'm not sure," Thor said, "about five minutes I think."

Bergur glanced at his wrist watch. The men waited in silence for what the thermometer would tell. After a while Bergur said, "Five minutes up."

Thor withdrew the thermometer and read, "104 degrees."

"Yeah?" Bergur said. "Is that much?"

"I don't know if it is very high," Thor told him, "but I'm afraid it is. Normal temperature is about 98 degrees."

"Then the little tyke's got a high fever," said Gunnar.

"When our little Anna has a temperature," Thor said, "my wife gives her an aspirin with sugar and water."

"A good idea," the Boss said. "Let's try that."

The little boy watched the men with inscrutable black eyes. His thin face was the colour of a brown leaf, so one couldn't tell whether it was pale or flushed. Obediently he drank the sweetened aspirin water and seemed to want more. The men discussed his condition. None of them felt confidence in anything the other

suggested. Gunnar thought the boy should have cool water to drink, and Petur said it should be milk to keep up his strength. Petur had his way and gave the child diluted, canned milk to drink.

Then the men argued about what to do for the festering sore. Petur insisted it should be smeared with the salve for frost-bite and bandaged. Gunnar said that while he was in hospital with hand infection, a man in the same ward had had a sore on his leg and no salve or bandage had been used. The man had penicillin shots, and a crib had been placed over his leg to keep the bedclothes away. Everyone, except the old cook, thought this was a good idea. Bergur volunteered to make the crib.

"But we have no penicillin," the Boss said. "We might try sulpha." He brought the bottle of pills. "One is to be taken every four hours," he read from the directions on the bottle. "We'll wait and see how he does on the aspirin. Sulpha pills might be too strong. I don't like giving them to such a young child."

Amid all these discussions, the boy fell asleep; sweat dappled his swarthy face; he looked pathetic and so young.

"Sweatin' is good for him," said Petur, standing by the cot and watching the sleeping boy.

Wearing a wool plaid shirt of Petur's for a night-shirt, Little Chief, as the men had named him, was placed in Thor's bunk because it was close to the heater. During the night Garry awoke, rose on an elbow, and saw Gunnar stoking the bunkroom heater.

"You look slick tramping about in long underwear," Garry told him.

"Aw, shut up." Gunnar hissed, replacing the heater lid. "The room's getting cold. Little Chief is tossing about a lot."

"Is he keeping you awake?" Garry teased, for it was Gunnar who had said the sick child might keep them awake with his crying.

"Who cares? I told you to shut up."

The fire had burned low again; the room was chilly when the men were awakened by a sharp cry. Some jumped out of their bunks, and others sat up or leaned on an elbow. Phil lit the bracket wall-lamp and stoked the heater. The child, now silent, stared with fathomless black eyes at all this activity.

"Ask him what's the matter," the Boss told Petur.

"Kewesekayetaina?" Petur said in Cree.

The men understood neither the question nor the answer.

"He says he hurts all over," Petur translated.

"That sounds serious," the Boss said. "I think I'll risk giving him a sulpha pill."

"But they're for grown ups," Thor protested. "Maybe he should have only half a pill at a time."

"That's a good idea," the Boss said going for the sulpha. They gave Little Chief half a sulpha pill in sweetened water, and he fell into a restless sleep. He slept all the next day, just being awakened every four hours for his medicine. The next two days and nights were anxious ones.

It was after supper of the third evening since the boy had come that Gunnar tiptoed to the bunkroom. When he came back, he looked worried. "He's sweating more than ever and he's sleeping too much." Gun-

nar sat down on the bench by the table and pushed both hands through his sandy hair. "Little Chief is much worse. I think he's dying," he said without looking at anybody.

"He's a tough cookie," Bergur said. "I don't think he'll die," but he didn't sound convincing.

The Boss hurried to the bunkroom; the men waited in silence. In a short time he came back. "Little Chief is no worse." His face broke in a smile. "In fact I think he's better. He's not so hot, nor restless."

"Sweatin' and sleepin' is good for a sick person," Petur remarked.

"He's not out of danger yet, but by the time we can start working again, I hope he'll be well."

Chapter Eleven

The lake lay quiet beneath thickening ice. Some of the men hacked a road, with pickaxe and chisel, through the pressure ice ridge for the bombardier and tractor train. Others assembled fish boxes. The lumber for these came in bundles ready to be nailed together, and the boxes were piled up beside the cabin.

Supper over, the men worked at their hobbies. Gunnar's accordian filled the room with jolly music, and tapping a foot to it, Bergur poured boiled linseed oil into his palm and rubbed it into the wood of his figurine. Nick was resting in his bunk.

Garry, reading the last government report on natural resources, said, "It says here that there are five fish hatcheries in Manitoba and that 185 million fry and fingerling have been deposited in lakes and rivers. That's far more fish than we catch, and there must be a lot of natural hatching too. Why don't the fish in rivers and lakes increase more?"

"Only a small percentage of fry and fingerling reach

full growth," Thor told him, holding a finger in the book he was reading. "They're gobbled up by bigger fish and birds, especially gulls and cormorants; and mink and otter feed on them too. Also a lot of them die when they are dumped from the hatchery tanks, because the water is too cold. I worked in Gull Harbour fish hatchery for two years."

"That must have been interesting," Garry said. "Of course a lot of the small fish would be lost. I hadn't thought of that."

He read on, and then said. "I didn't know that the Canadian and American Governments exchange spawn, fry, and fingerling. We exchange eyed pickerel eggs with North Dakota for largemouth black bass, and lake trout eyed-eggs with Vermont for brown trout, with Montana for rainbow trout, and with Wyoming for speckled trout."

"They're placed in lakes and rivers for sport fishing," Thor told him. "Holiday motorists like to stop and fish and they like to catch something." He grinned. "Angling is an added attraction for tourists, and we have to encourage tourists."

"A good idea," Garry said, "but just what is the difference between eyed-eggs, fry, and fingerling?"

"The eyed-eggs," Thor told him, "are spawn that are hatching. They're put in glass jars with water running in and trickling out. Those that aren't fertile die, float to the top, and are scooped out. In time the hatching spawn get two black dots. These are the eyes of the little fish. They are called fry when they are big enough to feed and fingerling when they are still bigger. The eyed-eggs are the easiest to handle and to ship."

Garry went on reading until he suddenly noticed that Gunnar had stopped playing in the middle of a lively tune. Looking up, Garry saw the Boss standing in the bunkroom doorway, his mouth clamped tight. His gray eyes looked unfriendly and hard as he scrutinized the men in the room.

"Men," he said sharply, "I've been robbed."

"Robbed," Petur repeated, taking a step forward. "How can you have been robbed?"

"It's hard to believe," the Boss said. "I had a roll of money in my Gladstone bag, and it's gone."

"Wasn't the bag locked?" Gunnar said, jumping to his feet.

"Of course it was locked. I always keep it locked."

"Then how could anyone open it?" Thor said. "Was the lock broken?"

"No. It was still locked."

Knowing glances slid between the men. It would be natural to suspect the new hands: Garry and Tim were strangers among them. "Let everyone be searched," Garry said.

"That is right," said Phil. He was a displaced person, not so well known as most of the others and suspicion was likely to fall on him. "Let us start now."

Every man emptied his pockets and turned them inside out. The Boss and Petur searched the parka pockets. "Bring your bags out here," the Boss said tersely, "and empty them on the floor."

The men brought their duffle bags and grips, and Tim the gunny sack he used as a bag. They were all emptied on the floor. The Boss and Petur examined their contents. Garry noticed Tim's satin shirt, levis,

and cowboy boots; but the black brief-case was not there.

"Tim," he said, "where's the brief-case you had?"

Tim shot a glance in his direction, and his lips turned down in a sneer as he said, "I left it in the hotel safe at Gimli."

"In the hotel safe?" Bergur said. "Must be something valuable in it."

"There is," Tim told him with a teasing smile.

With a frown on his usually pleasant face, the Boss stood looking down at the men's possessions. The roll of money had not been found. "This has never happened in my camp before," he said. "No one is going to get away with the theft. I want that money back. Search each other's bunks."

The men went to the bunkroom and pulled the blankets and mattresses from each other's bunks. Nick, who had gone to sleep right after supper, was awakened and his pockets and bunk searched. When the money was not found in the bunkroom, likely places in the kitchen were searched — the bookcase, the shelf behind the stove, the cupboard — but the lost money was not found.

"Chris, are you sure you brought that money?" Petur asked what no one else dared to say.

"Of course I'm sure I brought the money. I always bring some cash with me. One never knows when it might come in handy. I've always kept it in that Gladstone bag."

"Where did you keep the key to the bag?" Phil asked.

"On a key-ring in my wallet. I keep the wallet in a tin box on the small shelf above my bunk."

"Who knew you kept it there?" asked Thor.

"As far as I know, no one knew it was there. No one knew I had money in the bag, nor where the key was."

The men were silent and worried and angry. Every once in a while someone thought of a new place to search, but there was not a sign of the money.

When the Boss entered the bunkroom, Gunnar said to Garry, "You and Tim come outside."

"What for?" Tim scowled at Gunnar.

"You'll soon find out," Bergur told him threateningly. "Get a move on."

Garry knew what to expect, and there was no way out of it. He wasn't sure he wanted to escape the fight, even though it might turn into a free-for-all.

"Come on, Tim," he said, starting for the door. The men followed, except Petur who eyed them with disapproval written on his wrinkled face.

The night was clear; the deep blue sky was pierced by stars. The aurora borealis threw shafts of coloured lights, like sky rockets, across the heavens. The men went out bareheaded, without mitts or parkas. Many wore moccasins on their feet, others slippers. They gathered on the path between the cabin and the net house.

"Now we want the truth about the money," Bergur said through clamped teeth. "The Boss is too easy, so we're taking over. Either you Garry, or you Tim, stole it." He waited for an answer. When neither accused spoke, he went on, "We're gonna pound the living day-lights outta you till you confess."

"You, Garry," Thor said sternly. "What do you know about it?"



Bergur shot out a right hand punch to his opponent's face. Garry ducked.

"Not a thing," Garry told him. "I didn't take it."

"You, Tim," Gunnar barked. "Did you steal it?"

"No," said Tim. "I didn't steal it."

"All right," Bergur said. "You've asked for it." He stepped up to Garry with bunched fists. "Get ready to defend yourself."

Garry had hoped it would be one of the other men. He disliked the idea of fighting his fishing partner, for their experience on the ice-floe had made them good friends. Bergur was shorter than Garry but stocky with bulging muscles on arms, chest, and legs. Garry had a longer reach and had had some training in boxing. He hoped he could hold his own.

They started by shadow-boxing on the uneven frozen ground. Then Bergur shot out a right-hand punch to his opponent's face which Garry ducked, getting a left to Bergur's jaw that sent pain shooting up his arm. Bergur shook his head dazedly and then advanced in a fury, swinging his fists wildly. This time Garry connected with the jaw with his left. Bergur threw all rules to the wind. He grabbed Garry by the waist, lifted, and tried to throw him, but Garry landed on his feet and swung a swift punch to Bergur's chest. Bergur slung both arms about him, and they tussled about.

"Settu a hann hael krok!" Thor shouted.

Garry understood. He knew what to expect. He tried to avoid the Glíma heel clinch, but was no match for the experienced wrestler. Grabbing him by the pant legs, Bergur lifted him off the ground, brought him down, and with lightning speed thrust his right heel behind Garry's left heel and pushed. For a few seconds

each hopped about on one foot, and then Garry tripped backwards. Instantly Bergur straddled him and began pounding his face with his fists.

The man seemed to weigh a ton. Garry tried rolling, but was pinioned down by the other's weight. Then with a twist of the body, he managed to get his right elbow against Bergur's windpipe and pushed, but Bergur kept right on pounding his face. By another twist Garry sent his knee to Bergur's groin. With a grunt Bergur rolled off Garry, but still kept his powerful arms about him.

"Where's the money?" he said puffing.

In the meantime, Tim was tangling with Gunnar. They were about the same height, but Gunnar was heavier with steel-like muscles. As always before a fight, Tim was scared. As a kid brought up in the slums, he had had to defend himself and knew all the tricks of street fighting. Only at the beginning was Tim frightened. Once in a fight, his courage came back and he fought with his hands and feet, his nails, and even his teeth if given the chance.

Gunnar advanced with tight fists. Tim waited until he was within reach and then shot a right punch to Gunnar's jaw which rocked him on his feet. Gunnar shook his head and then advanced again, and Tim smacked him with a right and a left to the head. Gunnar got mad and, ignoring blows, barged in.

"Settu a hann klovbragd!" Thor shouted advice again.

Tim was at a disadvantage: he didn't understand what Thor had said. Gunnar seized Tim by the pant legs, heaved him off his feet, spun around with him,

and flung him down. Tim hit the frozen ground like a sack of rocks. He lay there for a few seconds, and then leaped to his feet, getting in another vicious blow to Gunnar's head. Ignoring it, Gunnar came at him again, grabbed Tim as before, lifted him, and flung him down. This time Tim was half stunned, but he was still able to realize the futility of rising to his feet. He lay still, furtively watching his opponent through narrowed lids.

"He's out cold," Phil said, drawing near and bending over for a closer look.

"No he isn't," Gunnar panted, grabbing Tim by the shirt front and yanking him to his feet. "Where's the money?" he demanded.

The fight never came to a finish. The cabin door was flung open, and the Boss stood in the light streaming out like a beam, lighting up the scene.

"What's going on there?" he demanded in an angry voice. "Come inside, every one of you."

The men felt foolish as they obeyed, stepping past their Boss in the doorway. When they were all inside, he slammed the door shut and without a word went to the cot, picked up a book, and began reading.

Not so Petur. He was angry and told the men off. "Ain't the Boss got enough troubles without his men fightin' like —" His English failed him and he broke into his mother tongue. "—like vitlausir menn!" He glared at them. "Ain't you got no sense?"

The men sat down on benches and chairs. Those taking part in the fights were still puffing and panting. They glanced at each other and grinned. Garry and Thor burst into laughter like boys in a class-room. They

couldn't help themselves. They seemed to have forgotten what the fights were about — to learn who had stolen the money. Bergur and Gunner also burst into laughter.

"Stop that noise," Petur hissed. "You'll waken Little Chief." With a look of disgust on his face, he waddled off to the bunkroom.

Grinning, Bergur passed a hand over his rapidly swelling face. "You pack a mean fist," he said to Garry.

"Your fists aren't exactly powder puffs," Garry said smiling and touched the tender spots on his face gingerly.

"You should give us lessons in boxing," Gunnar remarked. "Let's have some boxing gloves sent out by the tractor train."

"Sure," said Garry. "But there are rules to boxing. None of this mixing of boxing and Glima."

This remark brought renewed laughter. "You could not wrestle in a Glima with gloves on your hands," Thor said.

"Fine," said Garry, "maybe then I'd have a chance."

Tim listened, not joining in the talk or laughter. His head ached dully. Never before, and he had taken part in many fights, had any one got the upper hand as quickly as Gunnar had. "Those Glima tricks," he said, "are they hard to learn?" He smiled boyishly. "They might be a handy thing to know."

"The hael krok and klovbragd?" Gunnar said. "No, they're not hard to get on to." He winked at Thor. "Nothing to them. It just takes a little practice."

"That's all," said Garry. "It just takes practice from the time you're about four years old."

The Boss stood up and put his book away. "Time you were in your bunks," he said. "The ice is strong. We'll take the bombardier and set nets again tomorrow." He removed the lid of an empty tobacco tin and placed it on the bookcase. "Whoever took the money, place it in this tin. There will be no questions asked. No one will know who took it."

On his way to the bunkroom Garry glanced at the tin. He hoped the money would be in it next morning. But next morning when the Boss looked in the tin, he said shortly, "It's not there. I thought it was understood. I want that money back."

After a silent, hasty breakfast, the men piled into the bombardier and were off to the fishing grounds with Gunnar at the wheel. They set new nets where the lost test nets had shown fish runs.

Garry suffered from the cold. In spite of wearing two sets of woollen underwear, wool ski pants, and two sweaters beneath his parka, he felt cold. There were times when he thought he could no longer stand it, but he carried on setting nets with Bergur. When the bombardier called for them, they had finished.

When they got back to the cabin, the tobacco tin was still empty, but the men were in high spirits. They were glad to be fishing again, and Little Chief was out of danger. Sitting on a wooden box nailed to the bench between Thor and Phil, he ate his meals. He knew only a few words in English, but smiled when spoken to. He knew them all by name.

The days passed quickly. The boxes were now filled with fish, about a hundred pounds to the box, and stacked beside the cabin waiting to be hauled out by

tractor train to the nearest rail at Riverton. This evening it was Garry's turn to wash the wet, slimy mitts the men had worn to work. It was a duty no one liked, but it had to be done. No clean mitts, no work, for dirty mitts are cold. Garry half-filled a small wash tub with hot soapy water and rubbed the mitts on a board, rinsed them, and hung them to dry on lines strung behind the cook stove.

It was while emptying the slops outside that he saw the tractor train. Fascinated, he watched it come creeping along the ice. It reminded him of a caterpillar. The headlights were the eyes, the five huge sleds the body, and the caboose with the stove pipe trailing smoke was the rear end with the hair-like tufts. Garry dashed back inside to tell the news.

The men dropped everything they were doing, pulled on parkas, mitts, and caps, and dashed out of doors. After a few cheery words of greeting and an exchange of news with the two men from the tractor train, Steve and Dave, the men loaded the sleds with boxed fish. The tractor train started off on its return journey, for it travelled night and day, the men taking turns at driving, cooking, and sleeping in the caboose.

Two mail bags had been brought in on the tractor train and the Boss emptied them on the table, collected the Christmas parcels, and stacked them beside the bookcase. Eagerly, the men sorted the balance of the mail. Those who received no letters grabbed magazines and newspapers.

Garry, seated at the table next to Tim, noticed that he shuffled the newspapers with shaky hands and that a film of sweat covered his upper lip. Garry glanced at

the newspapers with added interest. He had an idea which copy Tim was hunting for and he found it first. It was the paper which had been published the day they had sailed for this northern camp. On the front page was a picture of a smashed car. The caption stated that a pedestrian, Thomas Willard, and an occupant of the car had been killed. Garry then read the account of the accident. An eye witness had said that the speeding car, after striking the pedestrian, had swerved and hit a lamp standard. A young man carrying a briefcase had scrambled out of the wrecked car and sprinted down Market Avenue. All road police had been alerted, but so far this man had not been located.

Tim must be the man who ran away, Garry thought. He must have caught the north bound bus right away and got to the outskirts of the city before the accident was reported to the police. There he practically forced me to give him a lift. No wonder he acted jumpy at the time. Garry wondered how it felt to be wanted by the police. He decided to show this picture and the account of the accident to the Boss and tell him about picking up Tim.

Now he passed the newspaper to Tim. Furtively he watched him read it, but Tim read that and all the rest of the front page without any show of emotion or undue interest. Either he is a good actor, Garry thought, or my guess is wrong. But what about the two names Tim had given, one to the road policeman, the other to the Boss? There was some mystery about Tim, but what?

Now Tim became gay. He laughed and talked and joked more with his companions than ever before. It

seemed as if a load had been lifted from his shoulders. Garry couldn't understand it, for Tim certainly didn't act like a person with guilt on his mind. Garry decided not to tell the Boss what he had read in the paper, after all.

Chapter Twelve

There had been a slight snow-fall during the night. It was still, and the bright sunshine made the new snow glisten like diamonds. By now Garry could release fish from a net almost as quickly as his partner and was proud of the fact. As the day wore on, his eyes began to sting, and tears ran down his face, and his head ached, but he kept on working, rubbing away the tears on his cheeks with a parka sleeve. By the time the bombardier called for them he was having difficulty seeing what he was doing; his eyes were so swollen they were almost closed. On the way home, the men didn't notice Garry's plight, but when he was taking off his parka the Boss took him by the shoulder and turned him to face the light. Garry winced and closed his eyes.

"What's the matter with your face?" the Boss said. "It's swollen."

"It's my eyes: they hurt. I've got a bit of a headache too."

"It's snow-blindness," Petur said, glancing up at Garry's face.

"Snow-blindness!" Garry felt the tingle of panic run along his nerves.

"Don't worry," the Boss soothed. "Wash your eyes in a solution of boracic acid. You'll get over it in a few days."

Garry was glad to learn that it wouldn't last long. The glare from the lamp bothered him, and he lay down on the cot with his eyes closed. Thor brought a boracic acid solution in a cup. Holding Garry's eyelids up, he spooned the liquid into each eye, wiping the dribbles with absorbent cotton. Then he saturated the cotton in the boracic acid and placed a piece over each eye.

"That'll soon fix you," he said cheerfully. He gave Garry aspirin for his headache.

"What were you wearing on your head?" the Boss asked.

"The parka hood with a wool toque beneath."

"That's what did it. A man should wear a peak cap. It keeps the sun away from the eyes, and shields the face in a blizzard. I have an extra cap you can wear."

Garry felt disgusted. No one else had even a touch of snow-blindness. Why did he have to get it? He lay there fuming until Petur had the supper on the table.

"Come and eat," the Boss told him.

Garry did not feel much like eating, but sat down at the table. Seeing his discomfort, and the awkwardness of eating with his eyes shut, Petur said, "There're goggles here somewhere." He bustled about looking for them and returned. "Put them on, and then you can keep your eyes open and see what you're doing."

Wearing the goggles, Garry found that he could keep his eyes open; though they were so swollen, he peered through mere slits. He joined the men in their mirth at seeing him wear goggles at the table, but he was not really amused.

After a restless night, Garry got up with the men. "You better stay in camp today," the Boss told him, examining his face. "It's a bright day and cold. It's going to make you feel miserable."

"No," Garry told him stubbornly, "I'm not going to let someone else do my share of work. I'm going with you."

A quick smile brightened the Boss' face. "That's the spirit, Garry," he said, "but I doubt it's wise. However, should you want to quit work, you can spend the time in the bombardier, out of wind and sun."

"I'll not quit in the middle of the day," Garry told him.

The day was as bright, the snow as blinding, as the day before. In spite of wearing goggles and peak cap, Garry had difficulty keeping his eyes open. Half the time he worked with them closed. He helped to hack open basin and anchor holes. With only quick glances, he took fish from the nets and undid and retied anchor lines. Bergur watched him in silence, never asking how he felt. Why should he? Most fishermen suffer from snow-blindness at one time or another, and all know it is painful and unpleasant while it lasts but not serious.

That week, Garry spent each evening in his bunk. He noticed that Nick and Tim spent much time in the bunkroom together and he wondered why they didn't stay in the kitchen where it was so pleasant, listening

to, and talking with, the men. Each day his eyes improved.

And day by day Little Chief was recovering from his sickness. The leg-sore was healing with a hard scab which itched, and he kept scratching it.

"He'll get more infection scratching like that," Petur said. "He should wear a bandage." This time Petur had his way: he smeared the scab with salve and bandaged the leg.

One evening just as the men were about to sit down to supper, the sled dogs barked furiously. "Someone coming with dogs," said Gunnar. "Might be Mandamin."

It was. In a few minutes the Indian stepped inside without knocking. He glanced quickly about until he saw his son sitting on Thor's knee looking at pictures of animals in a magazine. Little Chief showed no interest in comic books, but he enjoyed pictures of animals.

"Boy better," Mandamin said.

"We think he is all better," the Boss told him, going across the room to shake hands with him.

"My woman all better too. Come home. Me come for boy."

"That's fine," the Boss said. "Have supper before you go."

At first Little Chief just stared at his father as if he couldn't believe his eyes. Then he scrambled off Thor's knee and ran to the Indian and hid his face in his pants leg. Mandamin patted his head. Everybody sat down to supper, the Indian with his son on his knee. The men watched the child, but didn't speak to him as

was usual. Little Chief didn't miss it, he was perfectly contented.

Before they left, the Boss placed tinned food and a bottle of cod liver oil in a sack and handed it to the man. Mandamin didn't thank them in so many words for nursing his son back to health, but he shook hands with each one of them. Little Chief seemed shy and impatient to leave. He too shook hands with his former nurses.

"I hope they give him good food," Bergur said when they had left. "Little Chief was gaining weight fast. Pity he had to go."

"The best place for a child," the Boss said, "is with his parents. We thought Little Chief was content with us, but he's missed his family. Did you see how happy he was to see his father?"

"Most Indians are thoughtless and mean to animals," Petur said, "but I've never seen one mean to his child. The boy will be looked after."

The little Indian boy had been forced upon them, but over a period of time they had become very fond of him. Now that Little Chief had gone home, the men would miss him. Camp would not be the same.

Before they went to their bunks Bergur showed them his work. It was a wooden plaque. Carved in relief was the face, in profile, of the Indian child. The low forehead, the nose promising to be aquiline, the high cheek bones, the straight hair brushed back, the neat ear, the shape of head were all there. It was a perfect likeness of Little Chief. The men stared at it in admiration. How could Bergur make such a good likeness!

"When I've oiled and rubbed it," Bergur said with

pride, "the high lights will show up. It'll look better."

"It's perfect now," Gunnar said.

"Really Bergur, you're wasting your time," Garry told him. "You could make as much money carving as you do fishing."

"What's wrong with fishing?" Bergur wanted to know. "I like it. I like to get out and fight the lake and the weather. Carving isn't work. It's just—it's a hobby. If I had to do it, I mightn't like it. No, fishing's for me."

He was right, Garry realized. He and all the other men liked to fight the elements and the lake. Fishing through ice was a constant struggle between nature and man, and the men considered it a game, never knowing what old Mother Nature would resort to next.

The days sped on. Now the ice was over two feet thick and each day the men took a little longer to open the holes in the ice. The piles of ice chunks beside the holes looked like chrysalis cairns, reflecting the sun's rays in prisms. Nearly every forenoon the wind rose and no matter which direction it came from, it was always bitterly cold. By sundown the wind was gone, and the evening sky was lit by bright stars and either the rainbow colours of the northern lights or bright moonlight, and the sled dogs raised muzzles to howl in defiance at wolves on the mainland.

By now Garry was almost immune to the cold. His hands and feet no longer went numb with cold all day and burned and smarted after he entered the cabin at night.

Christmas programs were on all the radio stations, and the Christmas music filled Garry with a sense of

loneliness. He wondered who would take Glenda to the University Christmas party.

When the men entered the cabin on Christmas eve, they were met by delicious cooking odours. "Umm," Garry said, "it smells like Christmas. Petur, what are you baking that smells so good?"

"Just some spice cake for tomorrow. This is Christmas eve." With one of his rare smiles, Petur pointed to the parcels by the bookcase. "Tonight is Christmas parcel night."

Some of the men were filled with elation as if they expected a pleasant Christmas, but Thor was subdued, doubtless wishing he was home with his wife and child. After supper, when Garry and Phil finished their nightly chore of dish wiping, the Boss got up from the cot and took a book from the bookcase.

He faced his men with the book in his hand. "In this camp," he said, "it is customary to read from the Scriptures on Christmas eve. My father used to read from his Icelandic Bible. Since he passed on, I've read. Now, I think it is time some of the young men did the reading. What about you, Nick?" When his son shook his head, he said. "You, Tim?" But when he also shook his head, he said. "Phil, will you please read."

"I beg to be excused from reading the Bible in English," Phil said, a flush spreading across his tanned face. "My reading is not so good."

This is ridiculous, Garry thought. The Boss shouldn't have to coax someone to read the Bible. He would be disappointed if none of his men obliged. "I'd be pleased to read the Scripture lesson," he said. The Boss

looked as if someone had done him a favour. He handed the Bible to Garry.

"Where shall I read?" Garry took the Book.

"St. Luke, second chapter, the story of the birth of our Lord."

Garry had read the scripture lesson at Boy Scout rallies; he remembered reading this one. He backed to the bookcase and faced the men. They were seated on the benches, chairs, and cot, their hands idle, watching him as if they were in church and he was the minister.

He began in a firm voice: "And it came to pass in those days, that there went out a decree from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be taxed." Garry continued to the end of the 20th verse. He handed the Bible back to the Boss.

"Thanks," he said. "That donkey ride must have been tiresome, and they must have been disappointed and frightened when there was no room at the inn. But think of the joy when the birth of the child was over and when the shepherds came."

He stood there a minute thinking, and then turned to Gunnar. "Will you play some carols, and we'll sing."

Gunnar stood up and reached to the shelf for his accordion, uncased it, and ran experimental fingers over the keys.

"I'll play this over once, see if I remember it," he said. And he played, "It Came upon a Midnight Clear," softly, making one or two mistakes. Then he nodded, and the accordion burst into room-filling sound. The men sang the carol, and Garry was surprised at how

full and melodious their voices were. Then they sang, "Oh Little Town of Bethlehem."

"Now let's have 'Silent Night'," the Boss said.

Gunnar knew that tune too. He played it softly at first, producing the tones of an organ. Garry had not heard him play anything except hoe downs, rock 'n roll, and popular tunes, and now he was producing such different tones from the same instrument. How could he do it, Garry wondered. With a nod from Gunnar, the men began to sing the beautiful Christmas hymn. They were on the second verse when Garry stopped to listen, for there was something different about this singing, and soon he realized what it was. It was sung in three languages. Petur and the Boss sang bass in the words of the Icelandic hymn, "Heims Um Bol, Helg Eru Jol"; in clear tenor, Phil sang the German words, "Stille Nacht, Heilige Nacht"; the rest sang the English words. At the end of the last verse, the Boss said, "Again," and they repeated the hymn the same way.

"What next?" Gunnar said.

"I think this should end our singing," the Boss said, "unless you want to sing something else."

"No more," Bergur said.

"Now we of Icelandic descent still cling to the old country custom of opening Christmas parcels on Christmas eve, but those who want to do so can wait till tomorrow morning."

"Let's all open them now," Phil said.

The men brought the parcels, placing them on the table.

"Phil, will you please read the names," said the Boss.

"Names I can read," said Phil. With a broad smile

he seated himself at the end of the table, and the men took their usual places. Phil took up a large parcel and read Garry's name.

As he undid the season's wrapping, Garry wondered what his uncle had sent. There were two four pound boxes of chocolates and a smaller box of mixed gum. Good old Uncle Ben had remembered that the fishermen often craved sweets and gum. Opening the boxes, Garry said, "Help yourself, everybody."

The next parcel was for Nick. A beautiful wrist watch from his mother. It was passed around for all to see. Phil read more names, handed out more parcels, waiting each time for the parcel to be opened and shown, and finally he handed Garry a second parcel. Garry recognized Glenda's writing and was reluctant to open it in the men's presence.

"Open it," Gunnar teased. "No private peeping at presents in this place."

With a chuckle, Garry undid the fancy wrapping and opened the box. In it was a paisley cashmere scarf. He knew why Glenda had sent him a scarf. While skiing last winter, he had lent her his scarf, and she hadn't returned it, but his had not been so expensive. He lifted it out, and a snapshot fell to the table. Gunnar snatched it up.

"Hum," he said looking at it, and then he whistled. "Just take a squint at Garry's pin-up girl. How can the man leave her to come out fishing?" He scrutinized it some more, and then passed it to Tim. It went the rounds, each man making some remark. Garry felt annoyed; he hadn't even had a glimpse of the picture. It came to Petur; without glancing at it, he reached out

and passed it to Garry.

"This is Garry's picture," he said reprovingly. "He should have seen it first."

It was a snap that he had taken with her camera on their last picnic at Wasagaming. She was standing beside the Wishing Well. Her short, blond, curly hair was wind-ruffled; she wore a faint smile, and her steady blue eyes seemed to look right at him. For a few seconds he forgot the men watching him.

"She is a very nice girl," he remarked defensively, placing the snap in his wallet.

"Of course, Garry," Bergur said. "We could see that. We were just kidding."

When Phil read Tim's name he seemed surprised. With suspicion in his eyes, he looked at the men.

"Come, take it," said Phil.

"I don't want it," said Tim in a hard voice. "I know it's a joke. I won't open it. Throw it away."

"Don't act crazy," Bergur said. "Take your parcel."

Scowling, Tim accepted the parcel. It was not in Christmas wrapping, but in a brown paper bag. Tim glanced into the bag and his face showed disbelief.

"It isn't a joke," he said in almost a whisper. "Look!" He held up a beautiful pair of Indian-made moccasins, beaded, with tops that folded about the ankle to be tied with thongs. He passed a hand over the velvet-like leather and fingered the beads. Then he said with bitterness, "This is the first Christmas present I've ever had." He glanced about with a smile and said, "Thanks."

In surprise the men stared at him; they couldn't believe what he had said. "You mean as a kid you never got Christmas presents?" Thor said.

"My family got hampers from charity societies," said Tim, "and there were toys in some of them for the kids, but none of them had names. The older kids always grabbed what I wanted, and I never wanted what was left for me. I never felt it was a Christmas present meant just for me."

"You poor kid," Bergur said. "That's been tough."

By the time all the gifts had been distributed and unwrapped, the table and floor were littered with gay Christmas wrappings and ribbons. It was just like anybody's home at Christmas time. Petur placed a steaming coffee pot and mugs on the table. Then he fetched some of the spice cake he had baked. There were no Christmas trees, no candles, no decorations in the room, but all the men seemed to be having a merry Christmas eve. Though some must have thought longingly of their homes and loved ones, no one would have guessed it. Garry, who had dreaded this holiday spent in a lonely camp in the wilderness, had found the evening full of Christmas spirit and friendliness.

Later, he said to Petur, "Who gave Tim those moc-casins?"

"The Boss, of course. When he looked the parcels over and saw Tim was the only man in camp who wasn't getting a present, he put those nice moccasins in a bag for him."

Christmas day was cold and still with bright sunshine. The men spent it like a Sunday, but there was a difference. Petur was roasting a huge turkey, and the mouth-watering smell filled the cabin; Mrs. Arnes had sent out a plum pudding to them, and they sat down to a turkey dinner with all the trimmings.

It was a pleasant day Garry thought afterwards but spoiled a little by two things. He kept wondering which of these men had stolen the Boss' money, and Nick couldn't be awakened for dinner. He slept all day, unaware of the good things he was missing.

Chapter Thirteen

The minute Garry stepped out of doors, he knew this was the coldest day they had had so far. The sun rose in a cloudless sky, and there was not a breath of wind, but the cold manifested itself in his stinging nose, and in the cloud of vapour before his face. Breathing through his nose intensified the stinging sensation, and breathing through his mouth made him cough. After some waiting because Gunnar had trouble starting the engine, Garry and the men climbed aboard the bombardier and were on their way to the fishing grounds.

"This is the kind of day dogs hate to be harnessed for work," the Boss said. "I remember a lead dog, Hector, and the trouble I had with him one very cold day. He simply didn't want to go out, and I forced him on." The Boss chuckled, thinking about it. "We had just worked a very short time when we couldn't stand the cold any longer, both my nose and cheeks were frost-bitten. As we threw the shovels and chisels into the

sled, Hector watched me with steady, intelligent eyes. Had he been able to talk, I'm sure he would have said, 'I told you it was too cold for work, but you would have your own way'." The Boss was silent for a few seconds, and then said, "I miss working with dogs. They were good friends, and with a smart lead-dog one felt safer in blizzards, and safer from falling into a crack in the ice."

"I've heard my uncle talk about crevices in the lake ice," Garry said. "Are they wide?"

"Some are small, and others are large, wide enough to swallow a bombardier or a tractor. Last winter a tractor hauling sleighs went in. The drivers managed to jump from the cab in time to unhitch the first sleigh, but they were miles from anywhere. They had food and fuel in the caboose, but that wouldn't have lasted long. Luckily another tractor train came along. After talking it over, one of the drivers undressed and dived down naked and fastened pulleys to the sunken tractor, and the other hauled it out. The diver was rubbed and put between blankets in the bunk in the warm caboose. He was none the worse for it."

By now Garry prided himself on being used to the cold, but this day he feared his face, hands, and feet would freeze before they finished the work, and the bombardier called for them. When it did arrive, they quickly tossed in the frozen fish and climbed aboard. This was one time the men were thankful they didn't have to run behind a dog-train as former lake fishermen had had to do.

The warmth of the cabin and the smell of roast pork was enough to make a man forget his tiredness and

cold. After eating, the men rested, too relaxed to do anything, though Bergur worked at oiling and rubbing the Little Chief plaque. Garry still had chills running through him and was standing near the cook stove. He watched Nick snatch up the kindling wood axe leaning against the wood box, raise it, and tiptoe stealthily across the room. Something about his tigerlike walk warned Garry of danger, though he couldn't imagine why Nick behaved like this, or what he was going to do.

When Nick stopped behind Tim's chair and raised the axe, Garry yelled, "Tim, look out!"

Tim leaped to his feet — a split second later the axe came down where he had been sitting, cutting the canvas chair and imbedding itself in the floor. Before the crazed young man could raise the axe again, Thor and Gunnar overpowered him, snatched it from his hands, and held his arms behind his back. Nick fought like a wild beast for a while; then he grew limp, and they led him unresisting to the cot and made him lie down. Even through his tan, Nick's face was pale and was covered with beads of sweat. He moaned and groaned and his limbs twitched.

"He's gonna throw a fit," Petur said in a high pitched voice.

The men stood around the cot, helpless, not knowing what to do for their sick comrade.

"Isn't there something we can give him to soothe his nerves?" Thor said.

"All we have is sleeping pills," Phil said. "They might help." He went to the medicine box and brought a bottle of sleeping pills. Bergur brought a cup of

water and between them they forced Nick to take two pills.

"He'd feel better undressed and in his bunk," Garry said.

He and Tim carried Nick to the bunkroom, undressed him, and put him in his bunk.

When they came back to the kitchen, the Boss said, "This can't go on. We must get my son out to a hospital." He was silent, in deep thought, and then he said, "He must go out by plane. I want one of you to go to Elk Head camp where there is a two-way radio. Send a message to the Police Department. Tell them —" he hesitated, and his face worked. "Tell them that this camp has a dangerously insane man. Ask them to come and take him out."

"I'll go on the bom," Gunnar said quickly.

"I'll go with you," Bergur said, going for his parka.

They got ready and left the room. The bombardier engine was heard sputtering and then running smoothly. Then there was silence.

"I'll take a look at Nick," Tim said, going to the bunkroom.

The Boss lay down on the cot. He looked tired and harried, and it was not long before he was snoring softly.

"He's sleeping. Good," said Petur. "Worrying about his son, he don't sleep good at night."

The four men sat down at the end of the table. "This is the strangest thing I've ever known," said Thor, rubbing his chin with the heel of his hand. "Nick has changed completely. He used to be the best natured chap in camp. Now he's cranky —"

"An insane man don't know what he's doin'" Petur whispered.

"I don't think he's insane." Phil also whispered.

"Of course he is," Thor said. "Why else would he act so crazily?"

"In the old country I've seen men act just like him." Phil spoke slowly, in a low voice. "Sometimes they act silly with gladness and sometimes silly with sadness. They laugh though there is nothing funny, or get evil tempered without any reason. They sweat and shiver. Their arms, legs, and heads twitch and turn. They vomit a good meal without being sick, still laughing." He glanced at the astonished faces about him and knew they didn't know what he was trying to say. "Nick acts like a drug addict," he ended.

"Drug addict!" Thor said in an awed whisper. "You mean he acts like he's doped? But where could he possibly get dope?"

Phil shrugged. "Likely brought it with him."

"But where could he get it to bring out here?" Thor persisted.

"That would not be hard, once you know where to get it."

Petur sat without saying a word, his mouth working fishily. He was too astonished to speak. Garry didn't speak either; he was not altogether surprised. Lately Nick had behaved like a person under the influence of a narcotic according to what Garry had read in magazine articles.

"There wasn't a thing wrong with Nick when he came out," he said. "He must have started using the drug, if that's what it is, after he got here."

"How could he possibly get hold of drugs out here?" said Thor.

Garry was beginning to see light. He remembered the brief-case Tim had handled with such care and concern. Tim said that he had stored it in the hotel safe at Gimli, but maybe he had lied. That must be it.

"When Tim asked me for a lift, and I brought him to Gimli," Garry said, "he had a brief-case. You heard me ask him where it was, and he said he had left it in the hotel safe. Maybe he lied."

"If he is a dope seller," said Phil, "he will tell lies, even to his best friend."

"But where can it be?" said Phil. "We hunted every place for the Boss' money and didn't see a brief-case."

"It has to be here someplace," said Garry, "somewhere in the bunkroom where Tim can get at it. We looked in the bunks when searching for the money." He was silent a moment, and then said, "We missed searching the empty bunks, the two lower and two upper in the north end."

"Why didn't you search them?" Petur said with disgust. "It must be there."

"When Tim comes out from the bunkroom, and I'll bet he's giving Nick a shot right now, I'll sneak in and give the bunks the once over," Garry told them.

"Doesn't this dope cost money?" said Petur.

"It is very expensive," Phil told him. "Some addicts use from ten dollars to forty dollars worth a day."

"That much? Forty dollars a day!" Petur exclaimed. "Nick ain't got even ten dollars a day to spend."

"It takes much money," Phil said. "That is why addicts turn to crime. They will lie to their loved ones,

steal from them, even kill them to get money when they are dope starved."

The same bell rang in all their minds. A dope addict would steal from his best friend. And now each of them felt that he knew who had stolen the Boss' money, but no one mentioned his suspicion.

"With two crazy men in camp," Petur said, "I better hide them guns." He walked to the wall where a rifle and shot gun were resting on Elk antlers, took them down, and hid them behind cartons of groceries. "They're just as well out of reach," he said.

The men sat in silence, each busy with his thoughts. The only sounds in the room were the Boss' even snoring, the crackle of spruce chunks in the cook stove, and the shuffle of feet as the men waited impatiently for Tim's return.

"What's he doing in there?" Thor said.

"He will be back soon," said Phil. "I think we have to wait patiently."

With a muttered curse, Petur rose to his feet. Phil grabbed him by an arm and forced him to sit down. "Do not be rash." He smiled at the old man. "We want to find the drug. If he gets suspicious, it will be that much harder."

"Guess you're right," the cook said.

"When he comes back here," Garry warned them, "don't stare at him. Get busy. Be doing something."

Thor, Phil, and Garry were reading, or pretending to read, and didn't look up when Tim at last came from the bunkroom. Not so Petur who glared at him, looking like a small rooster ready to fight.

"Nick's sleeping," Tim said, sitting down in a chair.

He looked tired and nervous and drummed the table with his fingers.

"You think it's the sleepin' pills make him sleep?" Petur thrust his face forward still glaring at Tim.

"Yeah, sure," Tim told him, relief in his voice. "It must be the pills that make him sleep."

Garry knew better. He knew that a mild sleeping pill would not stop the suffering of an addict. Only a jolt of the drug would do that. As Garry watched Tim, he felt deep disgust for him, and for anyone who would deliberately encourage nice young people like Nick to become addicts. What in the world had made a sensible young man like Nick do such a crazy thing as to start using drugs? Everybody knew the danger. In a way Garry took the blame for bringing them together. He should have told the Boss that Tim was not the man he had hired from the Employment Agency. Now it was too late.

He sauntered nonchalantly to the bunkroom, but once there worked swiftly. With a flashlight in one hand, he gave the two lower bunks a thorough search. Because they were not used, the mattresses were thin, filled with old, brittle straw mashed to a pulp. The mattress in the first upper bunk was the same. It held no secret, and Garry was disappointed. He had been so sure the brief-case must be hidden in one of these bunks. If it was not in the other upper bunk where could it be? He stood on the lower bunk and felt the mattress. It was filled with new, springy straw. He passed his hand over it trying to probe the straw, but felt nothing suspicious. And then he noticed that a seam in one end had been ripped. A feeling of excite-

ment swept over him: he felt a little as if he were stealing. After all he was prying into another's possessions.

This is it, he thought, as he pushed a hand inside the mattress covering and felt around in the straw. His heart thumped against his ribs when his hand touched something hard and smooth. He gently drew it out and flashed the light on it. It was Tim's brief-case! With trembling fingers, he unzipped it and looked inside. The case had a sheaf of letterhead papers with a lumber company's name and a number of envelopes with torn flaps, each enclosing a letter. Nothing else. Passing a hand around the inside of the case he found a zippered pocket. From this he drew out a roll of bills held in place by two red rubber bands. This must be the Boss' money, he thought, putting it back. Once again he dug into the pocket and this time brought out a small box. Opening it, he saw a hypodermic needle. He stared at the hypo and shuddered at the thought of the evil it had performed. Hypodermics had been invented for a good purpose, to help sick people, to relieve them of pain. He also found two teaspoons and an eye dropper, but no drugs.

Turning off the flash, Garry got down and tiptoed to his bunk and hid the brief-case among his blankets. Then unhurriedly, he walked to the other room, crossed it to the water pail, took the dipper down from its nail, and had a drink of water.

Casually Phil and Thor glanced at him, and he nodded, but Petur sat rigid on the bench and stared at him expectantly. Garry feared he would blurt out something demanding to know whether he had found the

dope, but Petur kept silent. With his back to Garry, Tim calmly kept on reading, oblivious to the byplay going on around him.

With his head, Garry motioned to the bunkroom and made a sign as if going to sleep. The others caught on. Standing up and stretching, Thor yawned loudly. Phil did the same.

"It was a cold, hard day," Thor said. "Think I'll hit the hay."

Thor shook the Boss gently. "We're going to bed," said he. "You'd better come too."

"I'll wait till Gunnar and Bergur get back. I want to know if they got through on the radio."

"It'll be late. You can talk just as well with them from your bunk."

"That's right." The Boss turned down the lamp. They all followed him to the bunkroom, but only the Boss and Tim undressed. When they were asleep, the others slipped back to the kitchen, Garry with the briefcase under his arm.

"You found it?" Thor whispered.

"It was in one of the empty bunks, but I don't think it has any dope in it. We'll soon find out."

Garry dumped everything out of the case onto the small work table near the stove. He held up the roll of bills and played the flash on it.

"That must be Chris' money," Petur said. "The thieving skunk to steal from the Boss."

"Here's a hypo," Garry opened the box, "and spoons and an eye dropper, all used by dope addicts."

"Do they put the dope in their eyes?" Petur drew closer for a better look.

Phil couldn't repress a low chuckle. "No," he said. "They prick a vein with a pen knife or pin, and squirt in the dope with the eye dropper."

"Such craziness," the old cook said. "Don't they get sores?"

"Sure. They get infection, but a dope addict is past caring, as long as he can have a shot."

"Too bad we can't find the dope," Thor said. "Then we'd have the goods on Tim."

"Don't be so sure it is not here." Phil took a letter from its envelope and opened it. That's all it was, an old letter addressed to the lumber company. He folded it and put it back in the envelope and put it on the table. Then he drew out another letter from its envelope and did the same. He repeated this many times. "There must be some good reason," he said, "for a man to carry a bunch of old letters with him." He gave a low whistle when he opened the eleventh letter; he held a small capsule in the palm of his hand. "There you are," he said triumphantly. "This is a drug."

He carefully placed it back in the letter, and in the envelope and went on with his search. He found five more capsules. "This is enough," he said. "This will convict Tim. There are likely some more, but this is enough." He placed it all back in the brief-case and zippered it. "Now let us go to bed."

"What kind of dope do you think it is?" Garry said. He felt too excited to go to bed; he wanted to talk.

"I would not know, but it is likely heroin. Where shall we hide the brief-case?"

"Give it to me." Petur held out a hand and took it. He moved some potato sacks near the stove and hid it

among them. "This is a good place. No one would think of looking here."

They were about to go to the bunkroom when they heard the bombardier drive up, so they waited for Gunnar and Bergur. They told them about finding the brief-case with the dope, and were told the message had gone asking to have Nick flown out. Gunnar and Bergur waited until the other men were in their bunks, and then went in and told the Boss they had been successful.

Garry felt tired, but couldn't go to sleep. He lay in his bunk thinking about what had happened, about Nick, the Boss, and Tim, and he wondered how it would end.

Chapter Fourteen

There was subdued expectancy among the men as they sat down to breakfast. They were pleased that the money had been found and, not knowing much about the stranglehold of drugs, they were relieved that Nick was not going insane. In a day or two, a plane would come and take him out, and he would get medical care. They would hand the brief-case with the dope to the Mounty; he would likely take Tim out too. For some reason they didn't want the Boss to know until the Mounty came; then they would tell him. Now they heard him talking with Nick in the bunkroom.

"I feel fine," they heard Nick say, "but lazy."

"You're not well," his father said, "so you aren't to go on the lake today. Stay in bed, and I'll stay here with you."

"I don't want you," Nick shouted. "I don't want anyone. I want to be left alone."

"I know," the Boss said soothingly. "Still, I'd feel better if I stayed with you, or if someone did."

"If you must leave someone," Nick said surlily, "leave Tim."

"Tim!" his father repeated in surprise. He didn't remind Nick that he had attempted to kill Tim the night before. "We'll see," he said softly.

When the Boss came to the kitchen, he said, "We can't leave Petur alone with Nick, and he wants Tim to stay with him. I think it should be someone else."

"If he wants me," Tim surprisingly said, "I'm willin' to stay."

"That's kind of you after the way he acted last night."

So it was Tim who stayed with Nick. The men were not quite happy about the arrangement. They thought it should have been someone else, but didn't argue with the Boss.

All night there had been a south wind, and there was a slight haze across the rising sun, giving a Christmas card effect. Winter still held the North in its deadly cold grip, but from now on there would be occasional days when the heat of the sun would be felt by the dwellers of the frozen waste.

Garry stopped on his way to the bombardier to watch a red squirrel spread out on top of a rock in the shelter of a spruce. At first he thought the little fellow was dead, for his legs were spread out and his head hanging down the incline, but when he saw the bright eyes blink, he knew the squirrel was basking in the sun. The chickadees were more cheerful than ever, and a blue jay sat in a poplar top and scolded those below.

They were on their way in the bombardier when he

said. "It feels as if spring is on the way. The birds and squirrels are cheerful today."

"Spring!" Bergur laughed. "Don't kid yourself. One day without a man-killing frost doesn't mean spring is coming. Besides, we'll pay for it."

"Pay? How?" Garry wanted to know.

"By a blizzard, my dear ignorant friend," Thor said in a falsetto voice.

The men laughed, but Garry wished to know more about blizzards. "How bad are these blizzards? Do you work in them?"

"He wants to know if we punch the time clock during a blizzard," Bergur said. "You'll find out before fishin' is over. Nothin' like experience to teach a fella."

The sky was cloudless, the sun warm, and there was only a slight breeze. Bergur and Garry worked without mitts. They had been working some time when Garry saw what he thought was the bombardier coming along the ice.

"The bom's coming," he said in surprise.

Bergur squinted against the sun and watched the vehicle approach. "That ain't the bom. That's a snowmobile."

"Who can be coming in a snowmobile?"

Bergur's eyes held a glint. "The fish-net inspector, wantin' to know if our nets are legal mesh."

Bergur went on working. Garry had never seen a snowmobile and was curious, but he had to keep on working to keep up with his partner. When it was a few feet away, the snowmobile slid to a stop. It was lighter than the bombardier, had steel runners in front, and was propelled by caterpillar traction. There was

a cab with a caboose behind.

A tall, lithe young man, wearing a long, hooded parka, ski pants, and high fur boots, stepped from the cab.

"Hi there," he greeted them, raising a hand in salute.

"Hi Siggi," Bergur said, standing up. "This is my partner, Garry."

Siggi nodded and smiled. "What you guys up to? Small mesh nets? I'm just itching to find some illegal nets on these grounds. I hanker to pour gas over your nets and set them afire." He laughed.

"What do you mean?" Garry said, "set our nets afire?"

Siggi gave him a level look. "You new on the lake?" he asked.

Garry nodded.

"It's this way," Siggi said. "In summer an inspector seizes illegal nets and throws them into the gas boat. But in winter he can't load the snowmobile with frozen nets." He grinned. "He pours gasoline over them and sets fire to the heap."

Garry and Bergur hacked open the holes the inspector indicated, drew out a few feet of net, and Siggi measured the size of mesh. This wasted their time, but they had to do it.

When the inspector was about to leave, Bergur said, "How's fishing at the other camps around the lake?"

"Fishin's good most places, but some camps lost a lot of nets when the ice broke away last fall. It'll set them back. This camp lose many?"

"Yeah, we lost some nets, but mostly old ones," Bergur told him. He paused, and then added. "How do you like your job?"

"Inspectin' nets, not bad." Siggi stepped to the cab of the snowmobile. "I'd worked two years with old Inspector Jonsson, driving the snowmobile for him in the winter and the gas boat in the summer. I even did the measuring on real cold days. I know the lake and the fishermen. On some fishin' grounds you're just wastin' time," he smiled, "like old man Chris Arnes' grounds. All these years he's never been caught with an illegal net."

Bergur grinned and said with some pride, "The Boss will get fish the legal way, or not at all."

"When old man Jonsson retired," Siggi said, referring to his job, "I sent in my application and qualifications to the government and got the job as fish net inspector. It isn't bad. Some of the fishermen are pretty ornery to an inspector, and they're the ones to watch. If they've nothin' to hide, why be down on an inspector?" He chuckled. "Me! I know what to expect in each camp and work accordingly." He lifted a heavy gunny sack and dropped it to the ground. "I have something for your boss; so I'll leave it with you. I heard Jake Mandamin had had some sickness and stopped in to see him. He asked me to take this elk meat to Chris Arnes. He said it was paid for."

"It isn't paid for," Bergur told him with a smile, "but we did Mandamin a small favour; so he wants to do us one. Elk roast and steak will taste good."

Garry looked down at the sack of meat. "This isn't the big game hunting season. Mightn't Mandamin get into trouble giving us this meat?"

"A treaty Indian can hunt at any time and he can give game to his friends, but he can't sell it," Bergur told him.

Siggi got into the cab of the snowmobile and sat there gazing at the sky through the open door. "Looks as if she's buildin' up for a bit of a blow," he said. "Hope I make Elk Head camp before she strikes. I'll be seein' you." He slammed the door and gunned the engine. Garry watched the snowmobile go skimming along the ice like a giant water beetle on a pond.

"It had to come just now," Bergur said disgustedly, watching the sky.

"What had to come?"

"Everything. First we had to get the inspector when we're short two men and want to hurry back to camp, and now the blizzard. She'll strike tonight. Might last for days, and it might keep the plane from coming." He turned back to work. "I don't like it," he repeated.

"You think they'll take Tim out too?"

"With a brief-case filled with dope and stolen money. I should hope so. Everything will have to be told to the Mounty."

During the afternoon, the wind rose from the north, north-east, and the sun hid behind an overcast sky. Bergur and Garry hurried with their work. They were waiting impatiently when the bombardier drove up. The men had had to unload Nick's and Tim's nets and were later than usual.

The wind had now risen to a gale. "Dust Devils" of snow danced and whirled across the ice. There was tension among the men as they rode back to camp. They wondered how Nick had behaved during the day and whether Petur and Tim had been able to restrain him if he had become violent.

"I hope things were all right at camp," Thor voiced their mutual concern.

Garry glanced at the Boss seated beside Gunnar. He was not watching where they were going. He seemed lost in thought.

"The two of them should be able to keep Nick quiet," Phil said.

"If Nick turned on Tim," Bergur said, "the old man might think it served him right. He might not want to help Tim."

"Nick seemed quite cheerful this morning," Garry said.

"Cheerful this morning," Phil said, "but that does not mean he was cheerful all day."

This remark increased the men's worry, and they sat in silence. The violent wind struck the bombardier broadsides and seemed to whistle right through it. In spite of the heater, it was almost as cold inside as out. Sometimes the bombardier shuddered as if giant hands were trying to tear it apart, and sometimes these same hands tried to push it over on its side. Then the snow came pelting down, and the headlights were almost useless.

"Now we're in for it," Bergur said.

The men sat on boxes near the front; the fish were piled in the back. Suddenly Gunnar cut the ignition and twirled the steering wheel. "Crevice!" he yelled. "Everybody jump!"

All the men leaped to their feet and as the bombardier went into a spin were thrown against each other. Bergur was closest to the door. He flung it open and jumped out, followed by the others including Gunnar, before the bombardier had come to a full stop.

For a full minute the men stood there. Then Gunnar entered the bombardier and brought out two lighted

lanterns and a hank of new rope. It didn't take the men long to get over their shock, for it was a shock to realize how close they had come to toppling into the deep water.

The crevice was long but not very wide and ran at right angles to the direction in which they were going. They had missed dropping into it by a few inches. Just inches. The bombardier teetered on the brink, two thirds of one caterpillar resting on air above the gaping wound in the lake ice.

"She's there to stay till the crevice freezes over," the Boss raised his voice to be heard above the storm. "We daren't try to move her."

Bergur also raised his voice. "That means walking, and we want to get to camp in a hurry. I think we should try to move it."

"Too big a risk," the Boss shouted. "Any little move might send her in."

"I think it can be done," Gunnar said, going down on his knees in front of the bombardier, and pushing a lantern beneath it. He stood up and said, "We can hack a shallow trench beside the near caterpillar, sling a rope about the bom, and ease her over this way."

"Sure. We'll do that." Thor entered the bombardier and handed out chisels. The lanterns were placed beside the caterpillar, and the men began working. Their backs were turned to the wind, with hoods drawn tight, and heads lowered against the driving snow. They were experts at hacking ice and soon had a shallow trench reaching in beneath the caterpillar.

When they had finished, the Boss said. "This is no good. We don't know which way she'll swing."

"We'll sling the rope around the bom and steady her as she moves," Bergur said. "It'll work."

After some difficulty they got a big loop of rope around the bombardier.

"It's slippery underfoot," the Boss said. "We can't hold her. Better make a few footholds, so that we won't slip."

This was reasonable. The men began working at once. They chiselled holes, one behind the other, and sat down and pushed their feet against the sides of these holes. Had anyone seen them and not known what they were doing, he would have thought they were getting ready for a tug of war. But this was no game. This was stark reality. Gunnar climbed aboard the bombardier and started the engine. The men braced their feet, clutching the rope with both mittened hands.

"Now!" Gunnar shouted, letting in the clutch, and feeding just enough gas to barely move the bombardier. The men hauled on the rope, their legs stiffened, their shoulder and arm muscles taut. As the bombardier inched forward, it slid into the trench and then out again. It was safe.

The men jumped to their feet, shouting and yelling in their relief and pleasure. The rope, chisels, and lanterns were tossed inside, and they climbed aboard.

Until now Garry had not given this much thought. There hadn't been time, and he had been too busy. But now that he had time to think about it, he shivered all over, and it was not from cold. They had had a narrow escape from death. Even this was to be expected by the fishermen, and when it happened, methods of solv-

ing their predicament had to be thought out. And that was that. The men took it in their stride.

They rolled along at a good clip, with Gunnar's eyes glued to what little could be seen through the snow-cluttered windshield. It was some time later when he cut the gas and the bombardier slackened speed and then stopped.

"It's nothing to worry about," he said. "We're almost atop the pressure ice, but I can't see the cut road."

"We've been blown off course," the Boss said. "Turn north and follow the shoreline."

Gunnar turned and back-tracked. The men felt annoyed at this delay. They were cold and hungry and tired, and they were anxious about Nick.

"I think it's here," Thor said. "Make a slow turn and we'll soon find out."

Gunnar turned, and the lights caught the cut in the pressure ridge. The bombardier climbed up the incline and came to a stop on the south side of the cabin. Stiff from the cold and from sitting on the hard boxes, the men scrambled out and trooped into the cabin.

"How are things?" the Boss said to Petur, trying to sound cheerful.

Petur didn't answer. He was standing by the stove stirring stew in a pot.

"Petur!" the Boss took the cook by the arm and turned him about. "Answer me. Where's Nick?"

Petur's face worked: he looked ready to weep. Then he cleared his throat, and said. "Nick's gone! They're both gone!"

Chapter Fifteen

On entering the cabin, the men had started shedding their outer garments. Bergur, in the middle of the room, had one arm out of his parka and stood with it dangling by the other sleeve. Gunnar, with one leg out of his outer pants, stopped and forgot to remove the other. Thor had his boots off and his outer pants pushed down to his ankles, but didn't step out of them. All the men stopped whatever they were doing and stared at Petur in open-mouthed surprise. They couldn't believe their ears. This couldn't have happened. Tim and Nick couldn't be out on the lake in this murderous blizzard.

"Gone!" the Boss repeated. "How can they be gone? How did they go?"

"They went by the dogs." Petur's eyes were bright with unshed tears.

"When? At what time?" The Boss' hope rose. If they had left in the morning, there was a chance that

they had reached town before the blizzard struck.

Petur glanced at the battered alarm clock on the shelf by the stove. "They left three hours ago. It was blowin' but not snowin' when they went."

"Did they tell you where they were going? Or why?" Thor asked.

"They wouldn't talk to me." The cook shuffled to a chair and sank down. "At first Nick stayed in his bunk; didn't get up for lunch, but Tim ate. Later Nick got up and acted like a witless man. He quarrelled with Tim. Tim seemed scared of him." Petur drew a deep breath, held it, and then released it in a sigh. "Nick took blankets. When I asked him what he was doing, he told me to shut up. I asked where he was going. And he — he pushed me. I almost fell."

"Did Nick seem to be sick?" said Bergur.

"He didn't seem to be sick. He acted mad at Tim and kept threatening to shoot him if he wouldn't come." Petur looked at the spot where he had hidden the rifle and shot gun. "The guns are still where I hid them."

"You said Nick acted like a witless man," Gunnar said. "What did he do?"

"Both he and Tim tore all the bedding from the bunks. Then they came in here and hunted everywhere, but they didn't find anything."

In worried silence the men hung up their clothes and washed up. Each man was weighing the chances that the two boys had of survival in this storm, on the shelterless lake. Of course men and their dogs had often been caught on the lake in blizzards and had survived, but they had had experience and were in their full senses. Tim knew nothing about sled dogs,

blizzards, or the lake. Nick, though having had some experience on the lake, was not in his right mind. The men held small hope for them; it was not a pleasant thought.

In spite of all this excitement and worry, Petur had gone ahead with his work and they sat down to a good meal of hot tea biscuits and beef stew. While eating, they heard a fumbling at the doorlatch. Thor jumped from the table and was halfway to the door when it opened, letting in wind and snow. A Royal Canadian Mounted Policeman stepped inside, slamming the door shut. After one disappointed glance, the men resumed their eating.

For a second the MOUNTY glanced about him, and then took off his fur gauntlets, muskrat cap, and short buffalo jacket. Shaking the snow out of his jacket, he tossed it on the cot, strode to the cook stove, and stood there rubbing life back into his cold hands.

"Lucky I saw where you drove in," he said. "If I hadn't seen your bom lights, I might have missed the island. An SOS was radioed about an insane man at this camp." He faced the men. "Planes are grounded; so I was sent from Riverton to take him out." When no one spoke, he said. "What's wrong? Did he kill someone, or is he dead?"

"We hope he isn't dead," Thor said.

"Did he kill someone? Speak up. What's the trouble?"

"Excuse us," the Boss said rising from the table, and going forward. "Excuse us Corporal but —"

"Constable," the MOUNTY corrected with a smile. "Constable Hawkins."

"It's — it's my son, Nick," the Boss told him. "We've just come in off the lake, and he isn't here. He's gone."

"Gone?" The MOUNTY's gray eyes hardened. "Why didn't you guard an insane man?"

"We did leave a man with him," Bergur said, "but he has gone too."

"How did they go?"

"By dog-train," Bergur told him.

"Humm." The constable came to the table and sat down on the end of a bench. "Maybe they're all right. Perhaps this man decided to take your son out."

"I'm afraid it isn't that way." The Boss sat down at his place at the table. "The man with my son is a greenhorn. He would never have left of his own free will. Nick must have forced him to go."

"This is a little complicated," Thor said. "Nick is not really insane. We thought he was, but now we fear he's a drug addict."

"What nonsense is this?" the Boss said harshly, rising to his feet. "Why do you say that?"

"I'm sorry, but it is the truth," Phil told him. "Tim has been giving, or selling Nick drugs. I think it is heroin."

"Why wasn't I told?" the Boss demanded sinking to his seat.

"We weren't sure till last night," Garry said, "not till we found the dope in Tim's brief-case. We thought it was killing Nick; so we hid it. I think that's why they left, to get more dope."

"Dope," the MOUNTY mused. "I never expected to run across a drug addict among the fishermen on this lake." A scowl settled on his weather-beaten granite-like face.

"Give me a bite to eat," he said, "and then we'll go and hunt for them."

Petur brought a plate, a mug, and cutlery and placed them on the table.

"What's the name of the man with the dope?" the Mounty said, dipping into the stew bowl.

"I hired a man from the Employment Agency," the Boss said, "by the name of Timothy Carlson. I saw Tim with Garry and asked if he was the man I'd hired. He said he was."

"And wasn't he? Which of you is Garry?"

"I am," Garry said. "Tim rode in my car to Gimli. I picked him up on the outskirts of Winnipeg. I had never seen him before."

"So you gave this dope peddler a lift?" the Mounty's eyes bored into Garry's.

"Yes." Garry licked his dry lips. "I was stopped on the way by a road policeman who asked for our names, car license, and where we were going. Tim said his name was Sam Wilson and that he was going on the lake fishing, just as I was."

The constable half closed his eyes, and the lines about his mouth deepened. "Why didn't you tell your boss this man was unknown to you, a pick up, and that he had given another name?"

"I don't know," Garry confessed. "At the time it seemed none of my business."

"You might have saved the police a lot of trouble. If my guess is right this man was the driver of a car that killed two people last fall. All police were alerted. I investigated the fishermen going on the lake, but some tugs had left." The Mounty buttered a piece of bread,

and then said, "What made you suspicious of him? What made you think he had dope?"

"At the time I picked him up, Tim had a brief-case hidden in his jacket. Some money was stolen here and everybody's things were searched. The brief-case was not among Tim's belongings, and I asked him about it. He said he'd left it in the hotel safe at Gimli."

"Then how did you find it?"

"Nick began acting strange. Most of the men thought he was going insane, but Phil told us it looked as if Nick was taking dope. We searched again and found the brief-case inside the mattress of an unused bunk. The lost money and the dope were in it."

"Uh huh." Constable Hawkins passed his mug for more coffee. "One of the men killed in the car accident was called Loom, a known peddler from the west coast. He had been traced to Winnipeg, and the police were working to catch him with the stuff and to get information about others in the dope ring." He smiled wryly. "There were real regrets in police circles when Loom was killed."

The constable turned to Garry with a hard look on his stern face. "Can you prove that you're telling the truth, that you're not an accomplice?"

Garry was scared. He could feel the hair rise on his head and a tingle of cold run down his back. How could he prove he was not Tim's accomplice? What if Tim lied? What if Tim said, that he, Garry, had planned this with him, expecting a share in the loot?

Phil placed his elbows on the table and leaned forward. "That can easily be proved, sir," he said. "Garry had never seen dope until I showed him the capsule

from the brief-case. He is no friend of Tim's, is not an accomplice, and knew nothing about it."

The men backed Phil. Each told the Mountry why he knew Garry was not Tim's accomplice and listening to them made Garry feel better.

"Why do we waste time with all this talking?" the Boss stood up from the table. "This has stunned me so, I can hardly think. Men, get ready and search for them in the bom."

"I was coming to that," the Constable said. He spoke to Garry. "There's a drum of gas in the caboose of my snow'bile. Siphon some into the two-gallon tin you'll find there and fill the tank." He stood up from the table, stretched, stepped to a deck chair, and sat down, leaning his head against the chair back, and stretching out his long legs. "We'll go and look for them. They probably headed for Riverton, the nearest rail centre."

Garry was thankful to be through answering questions. He took down his parka, slipped it on, and took mitts and a flashlight. As he opened the door and stepped outside, the gale whipped his breath away. He fought his way along the side of the cabin and to the back where there was comparative shelter and there he found the snowmobile. He had almost filled the tank, was emptying the last tinfu! it would hold, when he felt something press against his leg. Turning the flash down, he saw a string of ice-coated, harnessed dogs without either sled or toboggan.

He was so taken by surprise that he stood staring down at the half frozen animals. Then he played the flash over each dog, looking for markings, but their water-soaked, snow-packed fur showed nothing. They

all looked alike. Garry was sure he had never laid eyes on them before and felt relief. Taking the lead dog by the collar, he led them to the other side of the cabin, flung open the door, and hauled them to the middle of the room where they flopped down, exhausted.

"These dogs were outside," he said.

The Mounty sprang to his feet and joined the others gathered around them.

"Are these the dogs the men went with?" he said.

No one answered, for no one knew. The lead dog lay with his head resting on his paws, the others lay on their sides, with eyes closed, almost spent. Dribbles of water formed around each animal.

"Taktul!" the Boss said sharply.

The lead dog pricked up his ears and gave a feeble wag of his tail.

"They're my dogs," the Boss said tonelessly, "the dogs my son went away with."

Audible gasps escaped from some of the men. They had hoped these would not be the camp dogs.

"They've been in a crevice," Petur said in a quavering voice, "but how'd they get out? How'd they get loose from the toboggan?"

Garry had been wondering about that. Now he dropped to a knee, snatched up the lead dog's traces, and examined them. "Look," he cried excitedly, "they haven't been either chewed, or gnawed." He ran a finger along the edges, "They've been cut by a sharp knife."

Garry rose to his feet, glancing from one worried face to another. The men weren't as happy about his discovery as he was.

"Doesn't it mean," he said, "that the boys didn't get

into the crevice, or if they did, that they got out?"

"Yeah," Thor said, "the traces have been cut after the dogs fell in. If the boys fell in and got out — it's pretty cold in wet clothes on a night like this."

"But why cut the traces?" Garry wanted to know. "Couldn't the dogs have hauled Tim and Nick back to camp."

"No," the Boss told him. "The dogs did well to get to camp at all. They would never have made it with a loaded toboggan." He paused, and then said, "That proves my son was using the brains God gave him. Freeing the dogs and hoping they'd make camp and bring help was the only wise thing to do."

"Let's go," the Mounty said, picking up his jacket. "Some of you men take the bombardier."

They had dressed while Garry was refuelling the snowmobile and were ready to go, all except the two older men, Petur and the Boss.

"I'm coming too," the Boss said, going for his parka. "There's room for all of us."

"I'll follow the island shore," Constable Hawkins said, "and then cut south-west. You follow the shore, and then keep straight on. Go as far as you think the dogs could have gone, and then circle, looking for a crevice. It can't be very far or the dogs wouldn't have made it to camp." He pulled on his cap and gloves. "You come with me," he said to Garry.

Garry was surprised. He didn't know why the policeman should pick him. Maybe he wanted to ask more questions. Anyway, he was pleased to be going to search for Tim and Nick.

As they stepped out of doors, they had to fight the

wind. When they reached the snowmobile, the Mounty opened the right cab door and got in, and then opened the other door. "You drive," he said, turning on the lights and the ignition.

"I've never driven a snowmobile," Garry told him, getting into the driver's seat.

"You said you had a car."

"Yes, but —"

"Then you can drive a snow'bile. It's the same, only be careful on turns. There are no brakes. To stop, cut the ignition and let her slide to a stop. Now get going."

Garry shifted into low gear. He couldn't back and turn the way he would have with a car. He went forward intending to circle the cabin, for he knew there were no boulders there. At the corner, however, he saw a huge snowdrift and he grasped the wheel tightly in his hands. He couldn't brake: he had to go on. He expected to get stuck in the drift, but the skis tipped, and they climbed the drift smoothly. He turned and peering through the snow pelted windshield found the cut in the pressure ridge, passed through, and slid down to glare ice.

"For one who has never driven a snow'bile," the man beside him said, "you're doing all right."

Garry started off, following the shore-line and for the first time he realized the hopelessness of searching for a certain crevice in this vast expanse of ice.

Chapter Sixteen

Garry drove along the clear ice at a good clip. At any other time he would have enjoyed driving the snowmobile, but now fear for Nick and Tim rode beside him. The wind had swept the ice clear of snow and piled it in drifts along the shore. When he reached the rocky tip of Coyote Island he saw a huge drift in his path. He fought an impulse to slam on the brakes, remembering that the snowmobile had none. He wondered if he should shift into low gear, but before he could decide they were into the pile of snow. Garry held his breath as he fed more gas, and the snowmobile climbed the bank and went over it.

Constable Hawkins had mentioned turning west when they had passed the island. Turning to him for instructions, Garry saw that he was asleep, his head resting against the seat back. For a second Garry hesitated, and then he nudged his companion with an elbow.

The constable's mind was instantly on the job, as if he had relaxed for only a second. He glanced at the speedometer. "We've passed the tip of the island," he remarked. "Now turn in a westerly direction." As Garry turned, he said, "a little more to the south," and then with hands folded limply in his lap, he added, "I've had only two hours sleep in the last twenty-four. No sense in both of us staying awake." With his head snuggled down into his collar, he went instantly to sleep again.

As he drove on, Garry noticed that the twin beams of the headlights were more effective; he could see farther ahead. It was not snowing so hard. Sometime later the wind had driven all clouds from the sky, revealing a half moon. It glared coldly on the desolation of ice and drifted snow. When the speedometer told him he had gone the required distance and now should start to circle and cruise around, Garry switched off the lights and looked about him. For some reason the moonlight made him lose confidence in their mission. It was so lonely and unfriendly and cold out here. Trying to find Tim and Nick was like hunting for two marbles on a pebbly beach — hopeless.

He turned on the lights and began to circle. He drove on and on in ever larger circles. The snowmobile left no marks on the ice, and there were no land marks to guide him. He had to guess when he had finished one circle and turn the wheel to start on a larger one. After some time and a lot of mileage, he criss-crossed and cruised about, but didn't find even a blemish on the hard ice. He shut off the ignition and lights and saw the bombardier lights some distance away. The

bombardier was zigzagging about. Had they been successful, they would have headed back for camp.

"No use spending more time here," Constable Hawkins, who never missed a thing, not even when sleeping, said. "We'll go back, zigzagging all the way."

"I've been thinking —"

"Yes," the Mountry encouraged him.

"I've been thinking," Garry repeated. "Suppose Tim and Nick turned back when they found going on in the blizzard impossible. It would be pretty rough going on the east side of the island. Mightn't they have gone on the other side of the island to get some shelter from the storm."

"By jove!" the Mountry jerked upright, "you've got an idea! Hunting any longer here is a waste of time. If they had taken the west side, is there any known way across the island?"

"There's an old road that the teamsters used. Nick and I walked across the island on it last fall. It comes in just north of the camp."

"How wide is the island at that spot?"

"Nick said it was between four and five miles."

"Let's try the west side. Drive up close to the tip, and then swing west and follow the shore-line. Let's go."

For the first time on this long drive, Garry felt a measure of hope and certainty. The crevice had to be on the west side of the island. As he drew closer to the island, it loomed up in the moonlight like a dark shadow on the ice. The southern tip was a long point of large boulders, now covered by a high ridge of pressure ice. Garry skirted the point and turned up the west side.

He drove slowly, his head bent forward, staring through the windshield. When he reached a place which he thought might be approximately opposite the camp and the road, he turned away from shore and began circling in ever larger circles. He felt that if the crevice was anywhere in the vicinity, he couldn't miss it, but after a long time, and many miles, he began to have doubts.

If the crevice was anyplace on this side, he should have found it by now, but he kept on going. Then his heart stopped; his headlights had caught a dark spot on the ice. It might be a crevice: it must be a crevice. He cut the ignition, and the snowmobile slid to a stop. "There's something that looks like a crevice!" he shouted, prodding the sleeping policeman, and jumped out of the cab.

When he got near, he saw that it was a crevice with a covering of very thin ice. But was it *the* crevice? He started to walk cautiously along the rim but stopped short when he saw a snow bank. What obstruction had stopped the sweep of snow? He advanced slowly step by step, his mouth dry, his mittened hands bunched into balls. As he reached the snow bank and stared down at it, he saw a toboggan lying on its side and a man's boot protruding from snow covered blankets.

He watched for movement but saw nothing. Dropping to a knee, he brushed the snow away, lifted a corner of the blanket, and gazed with horror at Nick's face, white and deathlike in the ghostly moonlight. Garry took off a mitt and searching for a pulse, touched Nick's temple, but his trembling fingers were without



He brushed the snow away, lifted a corner of the blanket, and gazed with horror at Nick's face.

feeling. He bent down, placing an ear against Nick's chest, but heard only his own pounding heart. He thought Nick was dead and remembered what good pals they had been the summer he had stayed with Nick's family. A sob broke from his throat. He tore the blanket from Tim's face; he too lay still.

"You found them," the Mounty was standing beside him.

"Yes. But — but I think they're both dead."

"Humm." The Mounty got down on a knee and thrust a hand down the neck of Tim's windbreaker. "He's living," he said. He did the same to Nick. "He's living. They're both alive. Bring the snow'bile closer."

Suddenly Tim rose up on an elbow and stared dazedly about him. When he caught sight of Garry, he said, "I knew someone would come. It took a long time." He lay back and covered his face.

Garry snatched it off again. "Don't go to sleep. We're taking you back to camp." But Tim didn't answer.

Garry sprinted back for the snowmobile and manoeuvred it alongside the snow bank. Excitement rushed through him. He had found Tim and Nick, and nothing else mattered. Then fear clutched him again. How could Tim go to sleep after he knew help had arrived, and why had Nick not awakened?

Constable Hawkins opened the door at the rear of the caboose, lit a lantern, hung it from a hook in the ceiling, and then spread blankets on the floor.

"Lend a hand," he said, pulling the snow-filled blankets off both men.

He placed his hands beneath Tim's shoulders, Garry took his legs, and they staggered to the caboose with him, and eased him inside.

"What're you doing?" Tim said staring about him.

"So you decided to wake up? We're not playing games, that's for sure," the MOUNTY told him.

Nick was a deadweight. His head and limbs hung limp as he was carried. He neither opened his eyes nor uttered a word. Garry thought he was either in unnatural sleep or dying.

"Bring the thermos of coffee the cook gave us. We'll feed them some coffee before going back."

Good old Petur, Garry thought as he fetched the thermos from the cab. The MOUNTY poured coffee into the top. "Raise Tim up," he said.

Garry knelt down and raised Tim, supporting him. The MOUNTY slapped his face. With a gulp Tim opened his eyes.

"That's better, young fellow. Here, drink this."

Tim drank that topful and six others.

"Now, stay awake," the MOUNTY told him. "Can you sit up by yourself?"

Garry pushed Tim to a sitting position and stood up.

"Where are we?" Tim said.

"He'll be all right," the policeman said, ignoring the question. "Now, let's attend to the other young man."

Garry raised Nick by the shoulders and supported him. The Constable tried to force him to drink some coffee, but Nick's head lolled limply, and the fluid dribbled down his neck. He didn't swallow any.

"He seems to be further gone than the other one. We'll have to get him to camp in a hurry. I think we'll try that road. It'll be shorter. You drive, and I'll stay here with them."

When Garry stepped down from the caboose, he saw the bombardier coming. They must have seen him go

behind the island. He waited. Before the bombardier had come to a full stop, the men were out.

"You found them?" the Boss breathed like a runner. "How are they?"

"Tim talked and had some coffee, but Nick didn't wake up."

"I'm glad you came," the Constable said standing in the caboose doorway. "You find and break the road across the island. We'll follow."

The Boss got into the caboose of the snowmobile. The other men piled into the bombardier and they were off. There was no pressure ice ridge on this side of the island. After scouting a bit, they found the road. Garry had no difficulty following in their tracks. He was glad there was no further delay in getting Nick back to camp.

Chapter Seventeen

As they drew near the cabin, it looked solid and safe squatting on its rock foundation. Comforting welcome seemed to pour out from its lamplit windows. Petur was standing outside with a lantern in his hand.

"You found them?" He held the lantern up.

"Yeah," the Constable told him stepping down from the cab. "They did the wise thing. They lay rolled up in blankets beside the toboggan, and they were covered with snow."

"Did they slip into the crevice? Are they wet?"

"No. It would be more serious had they got wet."

"How are they?"

"We'll soon find out." The Mounty had the caboose door open. He helped Tim to his feet, and Thor and Phil supported him to the cabin. "This young man is still sleeping," the Constable slipped his hands beneath Nick's shoulders, and Garry took his legs. Between them, they carried him inside and placed him on the

cot. Bergur and Gunnar began to unlace his boots.

His face haggard, the Boss stood at the head of the cot and looked down at his sleeping son. Nick's face had a bluish tinge as if he had a chill. It was covered by goose pimples, yet at the same time tiny beads of sweat covered his upper lip and forehead.

"His feet are damp and cold," Bergur said, holding one foot between his hands, "but they aren't frost-bitten."

"His hands are frost-bitten," Thor said, "but not frozen." He stood there watching Nick's face. "He seems to have a chill. Couldn't we get something hot into him?"

"We tried to feed him hot coffee," the Mountry said, "but he didn't swallow any of it. Hot water bottles should be piled around him, but I know you wouldn't have that many."

"We have none," the Boss told him, "but couldn't we fill glass bottles with hot water?"

"Don't like to place glass bottles with hot water by an unconscious person. Too dangerous. Some might crack and break and scald him." Constable Hawkins stood with twin furrows on his forehead. "Haven't you some empty tins with screw tops?"

Petur had been stoking the range with wood and now joined the men around the cot. "In the net house," he said, "are some empty gallon syrup tins. Don't know why they've been kep', but there they are."

"Just the thing. Someone get them."

Taking the lantern, Thor left the room and soon returned with six tins in his arms. The tops were unscrewed, the tins were filled with hot water from the

kettle, and the tops were tightened with pliers so that there would be no danger of leakage. A towel was wrapped around each tin, and they were placed on each side of Nick. Then he was covered with blankets.

"This should help relieve the chill," the MOUNTY said. He turned to Tim who sat squirming in pain in one of the deck-chairs. He didn't utter a sound, but anybody watching his face could tell he was in agony. Sympathy was mirrored on the faces of the men around him. They were waiting for the MOUNTY to decide what should be done for him, but Petur beat him to it.

"His toes are frozen a little and thawing out hurts something awful. They should be in cold water. That'll help the pain."

Bergur picked up a small tub, took it out doors, and brought it back half-filled with snow. Then he poured water from the gas drum over the snow and placed the tub on the floor at Tim's feet. Tim put one foot into the water gingerly and then the other.

"Ahh," he said, giving a deep sigh, "this feels good. The pain is almost gone."

"Don't keep them in too long," Petur warned him. "Take them out once in a while and keep them raised." He placed a chair beside the tub. "When they start stinging again, dip them in the cold water."

The policeman seated himself close to Tim and brought a small notebook and pen from his pocket. Tim tried to ignore him. He moved his eyes, giving each of the fishermen a quick glance. They stared at him with expressionless faces.

"Your name," Constable Hawkins barked, "is Thomas Bloomton."

Tim showed no surprise; he shrugged his shoulders. He knew it was useless to deny it. "Yes," he said in a low voice.

"On the afternoon of November second you were driving the car that killed Loom Warnick and Thomas Willard and you left the scene of the accident."

Tim gave a start and faced the policeman. "No!" he said, touching his lips with his tongue. "I wasn't drivin'."

"You mean Loom Warnick was the driver? He's dead. Can you prove you weren't the driver?"

"I have no driver's license. I've never driven a car. I don't know how."

"H'mm. Tell me how it happened."

"Loom had picked me up. He had some 'hot stuff' and was in a crazy mood. He always had a shot before going on a deal. Then he thought he could get away with anything and usually did. I often thought he'd kill us both with his fast drivin'." Tim squirmed about, screwing up his face.

"Dip your feet in," Petur told him.

Tim lowered his feet into the water.

"This time Loom did kill someone — a pedestrian and himself. You weren't hurt and you grabbed the dope and ran. It meant nothing to you that two people had been killed?"

"I didn't know anyone had been killed. I saw the man on the street and yelled a warning to Loom. He swerved to miss him, lost control of the car, ran up on the curb, and smashed a light standard." Tim was silent; he seemed to be thinking, and then he said, "I knew Loom was hurt, but he could talk. He ordered

me to take the brief-case and run and then later to hand it over to Spike. That's what I did. I grabbed the brief-case and ran. I caught a north-going bus and then got into a car waiting for a traffic light."

"Why? What were your plans?"

"It all happened too quickly. I had no plans. I was scared and thought getting out of town for a few days was a good idea."

And I had to be the one to pick him up, Garry thought bitterly. The Boss sat near his son and watched him anxiously. The other men, seated on benches and chairs, listened to Tim tell his story, their eyes focused on whoever was talking, Tim or the Mounty.

Petur was the only one who moved about. He felt contempt for Tim and was not much interested in his story, but the youth was a member of the camp and had frozen toes. Petur had had the same experience; he knew the agony of thawing flesh. He knew how to relieve that agony and was going to make certain there was no slip-up on the treatment.

"What made you decide to go on the lake?" the Mounty said.

"Now take your feet out," said Petur. When Tim raised his feet to the chair, the old cook brushed past the policeman and felt one of Tim's big toes with thumb and finger. "It's swollen hard," he said. "That means the blood's running through. If it's so frozen the blood doesn't run through, gangrene sets in. I've seen it. It'll hurt most awful, but you won't lose your toes. In a little while, dip them in again."

With a ghost of a smile on his lips, Constable Hawkins had waited until Petur had finished his examina-

tion. Now he said, "I asked you what made you decide to go on the lake?"

"It seemed a lucky chance to get away from it all. I thought I'd be safe way out here. I never wanted to go back. I had been thinking about that when the Boss asked if I was Timothy Carlson, the man he'd hired, and on the spur of the moment I said I was."

"How did you get mixed up with this dope ring in the first place?"

Tim slumped down in the chair, his elbows resting on his knees, his hands dangling limply between his knees, his feet in the water. "My folks wêre always poor and always in trouble. There were so many of us kids, and my old man hit the booze pretty often! As I grew older, I ran around with a tough bunch of kids. We got caught stealing, and I was sent to a reform school. When I got out, I tried to find work, but people always asked questions. When they found out where I'd been, no work. One day when I was hanging around a pool room, a man told a bunch of us he had work for us. I jumped at the chance."

"Can you give me the name of this man?"

"No. But I went to where he said and got this job — a dope pusher. If I hadn't done it, someone else would've. They were all addicts. I never pushed it on any new ones." Tim sat up and pushed both hands through his tousled hair. "I just delivered the stuff. I got paid good. For the first time in my life I earned enough money to take care of myself, to have the food and clothes I'd always wanted." He moved his feet about on the chair.

"Dip them in," said Petur.

Each time Petur reminded him, a surprised look swept over Tim's face. He was telling this policeman about his part in crime, but the old man showed no interest in the story. He was only concerned about Tim's aching feet. This was hard for the boy to believe.

"Thanks Petur," he said softly, giving the cook a quick smile.

"Did you enjoy your job?" sarcasm roughened the constable's voice.

"I hated it. I was always scared, but I couldn't quit."

"Why?"

"Loom threatened to squeal on me. I knew if the police picked me up, it would mean jail."

"How could he squeal on you without giving himself away?"

"He said there were ways. I asked him. Anyway, I was sure he'd kill me or get someone else to kill me."

The policeman closed the notebook in which he had jotted down some of the things Tim had said, and pocketed it.

"Where's the dope?"

Thor stood up, walked to the potato sacks, moved one, and brought out the brief-case. "The envelopes with the capsules I found are in the zippered pocket," he said, handing it over to the constable.

He unzipped the case and looked into it and brought out the roll of bills. "Is this yours?" he said to Tim.

"It's the Boss' stolen money," Garry said quickly.

"I didn't steal it," Tim denied. "When I tried to keep the dope from Nick, when I told him he couldn't have any more without paying for it because I might have

to account for what was missing, he took that money from his dad."

The Boss jumped to his feet and came over, took the roll, and counted the bills. "It's the same amount as mine and has two red rubber bands just like it. I'm certain it is my lost money. I never thought," his voice was flat and sad, "I never thought Nick would steal from me — or from anyone else."

"That's what dope does to them," Constable Hawkins remarked. He turned to face Tim. "Why did you start this man's son on dope? Were you drumming trade even out here?"

"No," Tim almost shouted. "It wasn't like that. Nick was my working partner. We got on well, and I liked him. One night he had a toothache, and aspirins didn't help much. I know what toothache feels like. There was a bit of marijuana in the case, and I mixed some in tobacco, made a cigarette, and gave it to Nick. The charge he got stopped the toothache for a while, but then it started again." Tim squirmed about on the chair.

"Dip them in again," said Petur.

"When the marijuana was finished, Nick seemed to be suffering worse than ever; so I gave him a jolt of heroin. I never thought he'd get to be an addict so fast. It seemed no time before he was crazy for it. What could I do?"

Garry had often wondered why Nick had started using dope. Every person knew the danger, and Nick was no fool. Now he understood. Nick had started to relieve the unbearable pain of toothache, not realizing that he was letting himself in for much greater pain.

He couldn't have dreamed that he'd become an addict. Garry sympathized with him; he could understand how this had happened. Tim, thinking to relieve Nick's suffering had unintentionally been the cause of turning a happy, healthy young person into a demoralized drug addict. It seemed fantastic, but it was true.

Petur brought a steaming pot of coffee to the table, then mugs, and a plate heaped with beef sandwiches.

"Sit in ever'body," he said, filling the mugs and taking the pot back to the stove. "Better stick your feet in the water while you eat," he told Tim, as he placed a mug of coffee and a plate of sandwiches on the chair beside him. "Chris, come and eat," he told the Boss, "you didn't have much supper."

The Boss spoke to his son, but Nick was sleeping and didn't answer. Obediently he took his place at the table as did the other men. The Mounty sat at the end. The pile of sandwiches was reduced to only a few, for the men had had a light supper and were hungry. Seeing that the coffee mugs were emptied, Garry, seated nearest the stove stood up to fetch the pot.

The Mounty half turned around to face Tim. "How come the toboggan didn't slide into the crevice?"

"The dogs stopped and didn't want to go on; so Nick gave them a bad beating. They dashed on and into the crevice. I was sittin' in the toboggan, Nick was standin' behind. He acted quickly. He hung onto the guy rope and kept it from fallin' in." Tim sat thinking and then added. "I never wanted to go, but Nick forced me to. There was a gun in the brief-case, and Nick took it. I couldn't get it back. He kept threatenin' me with it. I had to do as he said."

"He has a gun! Why in blazes didn't you tell me before?" the Mouny snapped.

"Seein' a policeman and my hurtin' feet made me forget."

Little by little Nick had been coming out of the stupor. He moaned and groaned and tossed about, but the men thought he was sleeping. Nobody had expected him to get to his feet.

"Don't move," he snarled, "or I'll shoot."

Unobserved, he had thrown the blankets aside and now stood swaying on his bare feet. But his right arm was steady as he threatened the men seated at the table.

Chapter Eighteen

In stupefaction, the men stared at the gun in Nick's hand. He had the appearance of a madman. His long blond hair was unruly, forming a cap of damp curly wisps, like Medusa's snakes, about his head. He had lost weight and his face was bony and shiny with sweat. The pupils of his eyes were enlarged, the iris had almost disappeared, giving him a wild, black look. Even without the gun, he was a frightening sight.

"Don't move," he barked. "Someone stole my dope. I want it back. Tell me where it is!"

Garry was still standing by the stove. The handle of the coffee pot was too hot, and he had been looking for a pot-holder. He was stunned for a moment. Then he noticed that Gunnar had disappeared from his place on the bench facing Nick. He must have slid quietly beneath the table, for now his head appeared beside the Mounty's legs. Nick caught sight of him and shifted the gun. If Gunnar made a move, he would be killed.



"Someone stole my dope. I want it back."

If any of the men moved, they would be shot. Someone had to get that gun from Nick! Constable Hawkins and the men were not going to be quiet much longer, and when they acted there would be shooting. Maybe more than one person would be wounded or killed.

So far Nick had not noticed Garry where he stood. He was in the best position to get the gun from the enraged youth. But how? An idea flashed into Garry's mind; he had not played rugby for nothing. Bending low, he leaped in a flying tackle, landing with arms tight about Nick's waist. Taken by surprise, Nick lost his footing, stumbled, and fell forward. The gun went off with a terrifying noise. The bullet just missed Ber-gur's head and imbedded itself in the log wall behind. In that split second the men all scrambled to their feet. The Mounty snatched the gun from Nick's hand and examined it.

"It's a P-38," he said, "a German gun. It has an even more penetrating power than a Luger. It's a favourite of criminals." He turned to Tim. "Where'd you get it?"

"It's not mine. I told you before it was in Loom's brief-case, and Nick took it. I didn't even know it was loaded."

"It's loaded," the constable said tersely, dropping it into his pocket.

Now Nick lay sobbing on the floor. The men lifted him and carried him to the cot. There he lay with twitching arms and legs, his face working, his eyes rolling.

"This time he's really gonna throw a fit," said Petur, who was standing at the head of the cot, in a high-pitched voice.

"I'm afraid he is," the Boss said a little above a whisper. "We must do something for him."

The Mounty came nearer and stood looking down at the youth. "He's dope starved," he said. "We'll have to give him a shot of the drug. We've got to keep him quiet until we get him to hospital."

After Nick was given some heroin, it seemed no time before he grew quiet and fell into a natural sleep.

"Time to go," Constable Hawkins said. "I want a man to come with me."

"Yes," the Boss told him. "Garry will go with you."

Here it is, Garry thought. I am being fired. He had expected it, but now that it was a fact, he was unwilling to go. He didn't blame the Boss. In the beginning he, Garry, should have warned him about Tim. He wondered what Uncle Ben would say when he learned his nephew had been fired from his job. And more troubling, what would Glenda think?

"Figure Tim's time," the Boss said to Thor. "I'll pay him his wages by cheque." He went to the bunkroom and brought back a book and pen. Seated at the table, he wrote a cheque and held it out to Garry. "I want you to take charge of Nick," he said. "First get in touch with Dr. Sigmund Thorkelson and —"

"But he's a surgeon," Garry protested.

"I know, but his family and mine have known each other for many years. He knows that my son is no bum. He has a clinic and he'll know the best doctor for this case. I have perfect faith in his choice. Get in touch with him as soon as you reach the hospital."

Garry was not being fired! He had been asked to do

a great favour with great responsibility. He couldn't understand why he had been picked, but it gave him pleasure.

"Nothing is to be spared," the Boss went on. "I want my son to have the best care possible." He was silent for a minute, and then he added, "Nick's family, on both sides, has been healthy and hard working. There have been neither alcoholics nor drug addicts. That should be in Nick's favour. I won't believe that his system can't shake off this curse. I believe he'll regain his full health."

Not one of the men listening to their Boss speak in that steady, quiet voice, doubted that he was right. They were certain Nick would be among the few addicts who regained health, that he would be well and happy again.

Garry glanced at the cheque in his hand. It was dated and had his and the Boss' names, but there was a blank where the amount should have been.

"You forgot to put in the amount," he said, holding out the cheque for the Boss to see.

A trace of a smile touched the Boss' lips. "I didn't forget. I don't know how much it'll be. You fill in the amount after you get in touch with the doctor and the hospital."

"I'll do my best," Garry promised. He was surprised and pleased that the Boss trusted him to look after Nick and trusted him with a blank cheque.

"Come back with the tractor train when it comes out," the Boss continued. "You'll be needing money for yourself." He brought the roll of bills from his pocket

and peeled off a number of them and handed them to Garry. "And Tim," he said, turning to the policeman. "Where're you taking him?"

"To the hospital too. A doctor should examine his feet. He'll be looked after. Don't worry. The morality squad is going to be pleased to see Tim. They'll be able to get information from him that they want."

"He didn't get a square deal," the Boss said. "It's when a young person has no one to help him that he turns to crime. It's up to us older people to see everyone gets a chance. Tim, you work with the police. Tell them all you know and help them to break that cursed dope ring."

"I will. That's what I want to do."

"And when you come back, your job will be waiting for you."

"You mean," Tim said in a husky voice, "even if I do time?"

"I mean, whenever you get the chance, come back to us. Men, what do you say to that?"

"Sure," Thor said, "let him come back to us. We'll make him toe the mark. Or else!"

They all laughed, including Tim.

"Get the young men ready," the Constable said. "I have to be on my way."

It did not take Garry long to get ready. All he took with him was Glenda's Christmas present which he thrust into the pocket of his convoy coat. First he would attend to getting Nick to his doctor and into a hospital and then he would be on his own. It was going to be fun to spend a few days in the city, to have a bath and hair cut, to get dressed up, and to take Glenda

to a dinner and dance at Don Carlos.

Thor and Bergur drew socks on Nick's feet, with the Boss standing by watching them. Then with some difficulty they slid his limp body into an eider-down sleeping-bag. Phil and Gunnar helped Tim get ready. After smearing his feet with a cooling salve, they bandaged them and pulled on wool socks and the moccasins he had received as a Christmas gift. Then they eased him into another eider-down sleeping-bag. The Boss led the way to the snowmobile, with a lantern in his hands, as Bergur and Thor carried his son. Gunnar and Phil formed a chair with their hands and carried Tim. Both youths lay on a thickness of blankets. The lantern still hung from the hook in the ceiling of the caboose, casting a dim light over the interior.

"Should you want anything," the Mounty said to Tim, "should Nick wake up and become violent, knock on the cab wall."

He shut the caboose door, stepped to the cab, and slid into the driver's seat, placing the brief-case beside him. Garry hopped in, and they were off.

Relaxed and contented, but tired and sleepy Garry sat beside the Mounty. The steady hum of the motor was soothing and he needed rest, for it had been a hard exciting day.

"Don't understand why Arnes hires boys to work for him," the Constable said.

"We're not kids," Garry told him.

"You, those two in back, and the other two in camp look pretty young to me."

"Winter fishing is not for old men."

"It's not for kids either."

"We're not kids. Thor is married, and Phil is old enough to vote. The others are younger, but there is nothing a man can do that we can't do as well," Garry said.

"Guess you're right at that. You're not men; neither are you kids." He chuckled. "I guess one might call you boy-men."

Garry's mind swung back to the men in camp at Coyote Island. They were a hardy, intelligent breed of men. He thought of them with fond affection and felt certain he had gained their respect, and was accepted as one of them. They appeared rough, tough, and careless and they were all that, but they were also kind and understanding. He remembered their kindness to Little Chief, never letting his colour or nationality influence their generosity. With a grin he remembered Mandamin, and how he had repayed them with a sack of meat. He thought of Petur, their splendid cook, a crank on neatness and cleanliness, but always kind and thoughtful. Garry thought about the Boss, who, in spite of what had happened to his son, had forgiven Tim and offered him a second chance.

It was men like these, fishermen of Canadian lakes, whom he was going to have in mind when he worked as a fish biologist and ichthyologist. The work would often be hard, but it would never be dull. Garry wanted to go on thinking about the men, and Uncle Ben, and Glenda; but much needed sleep swept them from his mind. He must sleep, for soon the Mounty would want him to drive the snowmobile.

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